



















# EUROPE TODAY AND YESTERDAY

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# EUROPE IN RETREAT



EUROPE

*IN*

RETREAT

*by* VERA MICHELES DEAN

RESEARCH DIRECTOR  
FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION



ALFRED A KNOPF

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TO  
W. J. D.



## FOREWORD

IT IS NOT the object of this book to give a complete history of the post-war period in Europe, but to point out some of the principal factors which, during that period, paved the way for the Munich settlement, and indicate the part they may play in the future.

As individuals and nations we are ever on the threshold of new — if not always pleasant — experience, which must be neither rejected nor extolled merely because it is new. In international affairs we deal not with anatomical charts but with living organisms, whose development is seldom predictable. This in itself makes it impossible to formulate rigid programs in advance, or offer “solutions” for problems which are constantly changing shape. The student of international affairs must take into consideration not only the isolated phenomenon visible at the moment, but the multiform complexity of geographic and economic factors, national characteristics, historical backgrounds, ideological conflicts, and those often trivial accidents in human relations which suddenly give significance to hitherto obscure or nebulous situations.

People in all walks of life, especially students, have helped me to formulate my ideas by challenging them

## FOREWORD

in public lectures and discussions. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Raymond Leslie Buell, under whose guidance I have worked for fifteen years, first at Radcliffe College, then in the Foreign Policy Association, and whose generous criticism and advice have proved invaluable; to Helen Terry, assistant editor, who gave me many excellent suggestions as to style and organization; to Ona K. D. Ringwood, librarian, who prepared the index and unerringly answered my innumerable queries; to Luise Scholle, who by relieving me of many responsibilities assured me sufficient leisure to write this book; and to Jessie Matteson, who painstakingly carried out the secretarial work on the manuscript. The views I express are entirely personal, and in no way represent those of the Foreign Policy Association.

VERA MICHELES DEAN

*December 1938*  
*New York*

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## INTRODUCTION

NO ONE who lived through the critical days of September 1938 could fail to sense the elemental nature of events which razed one state to the ground while exalting others, uprooted old alliances, blotted out political convictions, severed economic ties, and drove homeless men, women, and children into a no man's land of unutterable misery and degradation. The Munich accord, whether it be regarded as "peace in our time" or a "shameful betrayal," forms a watershed between historical periods. After Munich all aspects of international relations assumed new forms, came to be seen in new perspectives. It was no longer possible to divide Europe mechanically into democracies and dictatorships — the sheep and the goats, the virtuous and the vicious. It became imperative to look beyond the outworn symbols of everyday politics to the realities they often distorted or concealed.

Examining the post-war period in the perspective of Munich, it becomes increasingly clear that the World War marked only a pause in the development of political and economic forces which were molding the twentieth century. The seeds of nationalism, social revolution, and economic change were already at work in

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the so-called liberal capitalism of the pre-war period. Sooner or later they would have borne fruit without the intervention of war. This cataclysm merely hastened their fruition, just as the Napoleonic wars accelerated the growth of nationalism and revolutionary sentiment not only on the European continent, but also in the New World.

The trend toward national self-determination, once a unifying force, became an instrument of disruption during the post-war years. It had brought the belated unification of Germany and Italy in 1860-70. It had stirred the nationalist aspirations of Poles, Czechs, Croats, Hungarians, and others confined in the multinational empires of the Hohenzollerns, Habsburgs, and Romanovs, and gained momentum after the war when some of these peoples realized their dreams of independence. But the creation of new states like Poland and Czechoslovakia, and the aggrandizement of existing ones like Rumania and Serbia, created new minority problems.

The oppressed, having gained the upper hand, were now regarded as oppressors by a new group of subject peoples. Each of these minorities, encouraged by propaganda from across the border, demanded reunion with its homeland or full autonomy within the framework of the state to which it had been assigned by the peace treaties. Their national aspirations furnished a convenient pretext for Nazi Germany, which, without resort to war, used Sudeten, Ukrainian, and Hungarian grievances to undermine states that seemed to block its

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territorial ambitions. The doctrine of self-determination, born of the French Revolution, was used to justify Germany's demand for the "return" of Sudetenland, which had not belonged to the Reich before 1914, and Italy's clamor for the 94,000 Italians in the French protectorate of Tunis.

Under the dynamic leadership of Hitler and Mussolini, Germany and Italy resumed their territorial ambitions at the point where they had been checked in 1918. The Nazis, like the pre-war Pan-Germans, pressed for the creation of a *Mitteleuropa* and, like the German General Staff during the World War, sought control of Ukrainian foodstuffs and Rumanian oilwells; while Mussolini, who as a Socialist in 1911 had opposed colonial imperialism, renewed the demands of pre-war nationalists for expansion in North Africa.

Nor could Nazism and Communism, which transformed the internal systems of countries east of the Rhine, be regarded as disconnected phenomena, without roots in the past. Both movements, outwardly different in their national settings, starting-points and objectives, represented a revolt of the dispossessed classes against industrial capitalism and such remnants of feudalism as the aristocracy, the officer class, and a politically minded Church. Both, to the accompaniment of terrorism and repression of dissident minorities, sought to provide the masses with material opportunities and a taste of power hitherto reserved for a social élite. Both marked the trend — noticeable in the democracies as well as the dictatorships — away from economic indi-

vidualism toward some form of collectivism. Both, paradoxical as it may seem, represented an effort to realize the promises held out by the political democracy of the nineteenth century, which the possessing classes had too often failed to translate into terms of economic democracy in an era of mass production.

This belated revolutionary drive within many European states which had not experienced the full impact of the French, and sometimes not even the Industrial, Revolution was paralleled by a revolt on the international plane. Countries like Germany and Italy felt, rightly or wrongly, that they had not obtained their share of the world's material goods, and demanded concessions from the more fortunate countries which, in the past, had achieved wealth and power by force. It could be argued *ad infinitum* in answer to these claims that the demand for territory in Europe and the colonies was a false rationalization — that it would not provide outlets for population, sources of raw materials, or markets for manufactured goods. Such arguments, however, were beside the point. Just as in the case of internal revolutions, the question was not primarily economic — it was also a question of power and prestige.

The Germans and Italians felt a profound discrepancy between their national gifts and the natural resources at their disposal. They refused to be treated as poor relations, fed on crumbs from the rich man's table, or as objects of derisive charity. They regarded the Western democracies as hypocritical economic royal-

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ists, ready to resist all encroachments, no matter how legitimate, on the *status quo* they had once established by methods they now denounced. Barred from effecting territorial or economic change by peaceful means, the dictatorships anticipated, without elation but also without repugnance, the possibility of achieving their ends by war or threat of war.

The thesis that might makes right was by no means a monopoly of the dictatorships. It also formed part of the consciousness of the democracies, which for decades had controlled the major share of international economic and financial power, yet had refused to grant the Weimar Republic territorial adjustments which Hitler subsequently obtained at the point of a gun. This fundamental contradiction between the avowed ideals of the democracies and their actual performance vitiated all post-war efforts to achieve some form of collective security. With the establishment of the League of Nations the world had been expected to turn over a new leaf, to inaugurate a new era in which procedures of peaceful change — not force — would govern the acts of nations. Yet the League remained indissolubly linked to peace treaties based on undisguised concepts of power politics. These treaties, in turn, created vested interests which could not then be disturbed by dissatisfied powers without resort to force. The democracies, in the pre-Munich period, maintained the existing order by methods no less dictatorial than those they denounced on the part of dictatorships, and

used collective security — which by definition should mean security for all — to provide security only for countries committed to maintenance of the *status quo*.

To resist the demands of the dictatorships without considering the possibility of peaceful adjustment offered no solution of the problem — just as the resistance of the French aristocracy in 1789 offered no solution of the economic and social ills which had precipitated the revolution. It is conceivable that, as late as September 1938, France, Britain, and the United States might have imposed a sort of *pax democratica* on the rest of the world by force of arms, as Rome did over its vast empire in the days of Augustus. This did not prevent the Roman Empire from crumbling away before the onslaught of northern barbarians who also, in their day, demanded a place in the sun. The historical processes at work in Europe could not be arrested by force alone. Nor could the dictatorships be held solely responsible for European tension. True, concessions made to Hitler and Mussolini, without any guarantee regarding their future conduct, tended to aggravate rather than alleviate the situation. Yet a policy of making no concessions whatever until the temper of the Fascist powers had undergone a change created a vicious circle, since that temper was due, in part, to the previous failure of the Western democracies to consider change by peaceful means. The real problem, which has not been adequately discussed by either the school of “war on the dictatorships” or that of “peace

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at any price," is whether piecemeal barter of backward territories can bring genuine appeasement, or whether the process of peaceful change must strike far deeper and work toward a fundamental transformation of the existing international economic order.





# EUROPE IN RETREAT



# I. MEIN KAMPF:

A NEW EDITION OF PAN-GERMANISM



THE GRAVEST mistake made by the Western democracies in their relations with Nazi Germany has been to underestimate the shrewdness and staying power of Adolf Hitler. It is immaterial whether Nazi foreign policy represents the composite product of many rational counsels, or the irrational intuition of one man listening to voices on a mountain-top. Whatever the source of its inspiration, Nazi foreign policy has been distinguished by an astute estimate of the political and economic forces at work in the modern world; brutally frank maneuvers, unhampered by idealism, to

divide or paralyze potential opponents; perfect timing of strategic diplomatic moves; and unerring swiftness in capitalizing the advantages gained by threats of force. Nazi diplomacy, reinforced by German air-power, has again and again cut like a sharp knife through the fabric of diplomatic pretense, ideological half-truths, sentimental verbiage, and hypocritical promises, leaving the democracies no time to repair the ravages they had been unwilling or unable to forestall.

The blueprint of this policy was drawn by Hitler with a striking degree of precision in *Mein Kampf*, which with the collaboration of Rudolf Hess, now secretary of the Nazi party, he wrote during his imprisonment in the fortress of Landsberg on the Lech following the abortive Munich *Putsch* of 1923. The foreign-policy sections of *Mein Kampf* are not distinguished by originality. In them may be found the alluvial deposits left by many streams of German thought, which Hitler, with his capacity for synthesis, has presented in a few simplified formulas designed to capture the imagination of the masses. Here is Friedrich Naumann's program, published in 1915, for a *Mitteleuropa* in which a powerful Germany would dominate and organize the economic life of the Danubian region. Here are the plans of the German General Staff, which by the 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk wrested from Russia an autonomous Ukraine, destined to serve as Germany's reservoir of foodstuffs and raw materials, and by the Treaty of Bucharest sought to obtain control of Rumania's oil-wells. Here is the fierce, almost morbid,

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desire of Sudeten Germans to assert their "German-ness," dissociate themselves once and for all from the congeries of races and nationalities constituting the pre-war Austro-Hungarian Empire, and "go home to the Reich." Here is the almost physical revulsion against the Jews aroused in Hitler by a glimpse of Vienna ghettos before the war. Here is the century-old German urge, symbolized by the activities of the Teutonic Knights, to seek manifest destiny in the East. Here is the historic disquiet of the German people, whose territory, lacking natural boundaries and poor in agricultural resources, seemed open to the incursions of hostile races, and who suffered from the complex of "persecuting innocence," permanently afraid of "encirclement" by the French and the Slavs.

### *1. Pre-War Pan-Germanism*

Here, above all, are the doctrines of the Pan-German League,<sup>1</sup> which, long before Hitler, had asserted that the Germans were a master race (*Herrenvolk*) who had not completed their national development and were not to be cheated of their rightful share of world power and world commerce. The Pan-German League, again anticipating Hitler, had adopted the doctrines of Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain regarding the inequality of human races. Germany, it contended, should become a national state in

<sup>1</sup> Mildred S. Wertheimer: *The Pan-German League* (New York: Columbia University; 1924).

which "the boundary lines would correspond exactly with the boundaries of nationality." Nationalism was exalted above all other human allegiances. "We do not ask," said the League, "Are you conservative? Are you liberal? We do not ask: Are you a Protestant or a Catholic? We ask only: *Are you German?* The German nation is the meeting-point upon which all parties can make common cause."

Not all German citizens could pass this hundred per cent national test. The Jews were regarded as non-Germans, and consequently on a par with other racial minorities — Poles, Danes, Alsace-Lorrainers — all of whom were considered a source of grave danger for the German Empire. The real enemy, however, was Pan-Slavism, "whose victory would mean the downfall of the German people and all *Kultur*." Germany, according to the Pan-German League, should unite the entire German people — "all the Germans there are, including the twenty million (ten million in Austria-Hungary, two million in Switzerland, eight million in the Netherlands) who live on our borders in other countries, but who speak our language; and the other eight million who are scattered over the rest of the world." Only thus, by forming a closed central-European commercial area embracing Germany and Austria-Hungary, could the Germans defy the economic competition of Russia, the British Empire, and the United States.

The Pan-German League did not restrict its ambitions to central Europe. It also fostered colonial ex-

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pansion, to make Germany economically self-sufficient; to create new outlets for German industry, thus removing the danger that German capital might be used in the service of foreign nations; and to provide German-owned colonies for German emigrants, who might otherwise be irretrievably lost to *das Deutschtum*.

### 2. *Germany's Aim as Seen by Hitler*

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler took up the Pan-German theme at the point where it had been interrupted by the Versailles Treaty.<sup>2</sup> Germany, he lamented, "is no more a world power," but will once more become so, "or it will not be at all. To be a world power, however, it needs a territory which in the present age would give it the necessary importance, and to its citizens the means of life." The aim of German foreign policy was "to give back to the nation its integrity as a liberated great power (*Machtstaat*)."<sup>3</sup> He rejected the idea that German expansion might be subjected to external limitations. Might makes right. "State boundaries are created by men and altered by men. The fact of success by a people in excessive acquisition of territory carries no higher guarantee of eternal approval. It

<sup>2</sup> Adolf Hitler: *Mein Kampf* (first edition, Munich: Eher Verlag; 1923). The most recent edition was published in 1938. The translation used (with some minor changes) is that given in *Germany's Foreign Policy*, a pamphlet issued by Friends of Europe, 122 St. Stephen's House, Westminster, London, S.W. 1. For views of other Nazi writers on foreign policy, cf. Aurel Kolnai: *The War against the West* (New York: Viking Press; 1938).



proves at the most the power of the conqueror and the weakness of the victim. It is from their power alone the right is derived. If the German people today are cramped in impossible space and look to a wretched future, this is no decree of destiny, but is simply a refusal to stand and offer challenge." In his opinion, there is only one point of view from which questions of foreign policy have to be considered: "Can we expect profit for our own people now or in the future, or will a given course be harmful . . . ? Party, political, religious, humane considerations, indeed all other points of view, have to be pitilessly eliminated."

No methods are too "frightful" to achieve these aims. "The most cruel weapons were humane if they produced a more speedy victory, and those methods alone were satisfactory which helped to secure for the nation the dignity of freedom." The end justifies the means. "Diplomacy has to see to it that a nation does not perish heroically but maintains itself in a practical way. Every means which leads to this end is justified. To refuse such means could only be characterized as criminal neglect of duty."

### *3. Inclusion of all Germans in the Third Reich*

The Austrian builder's workman who was to become Chancellor of the Third Reich dreamed of effecting the union of Austria, his "beloved homeland," with Germany, "the common fatherland." He desired

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Austro-German union not on economic but on racial grounds. "German Austria must return again to the great German fatherland; not for any kind of economic considerations. No, even if this union from an economic point of view were of no importance, or even if it were injurious, yet it must take place. The same blood belongs to a single Empire."

The Third Reich must be a racial state embracing all Germans, and only Germans. Its duty is not only to rally and to preserve the most valuable original racial elements, but "to lead them onwards, slowly but surely, to a position of dominance." Not all Germans living outside the Reich, however, equally aroused Hitler's concern. He denied the need to shed German blood for the return of the South Tyrol, a portion of Austria acquired by Italy under the Versailles Treaty — but without renouncing it. If German blood was to be shed, "it would be a crime to shed it for two hundred thousand Germans while next door more than seven million languish under the foreign yoke, and while German vitality is threatened by African Negro hordes" — a somewhat melodramatic reference to Germans in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and post-war occupation of the Rhineland by colored troops from French North Africa.

### *4. Criticism of Germany's Pre-War Policy*

Hitler mercilessly flayed the foreign policy of pre-war Germany. The Kaiser might have had a choice of two

alternatives "to secure work and bread for an increasing population: either to acquire new land in order to dispose annually of the surplus millions and thus to go on preserving the nation on a basis of self-support, or to change over to production for foreign needs by means of industry and commerce, in order to get a living from the proceeds." The Kaiser mistakenly adopted the latter method. "The sounder course would have been the former. The acquisition of new territory for the settlement of a growing population has very many advantages, especially when the future and not merely the present is kept in mind."

The policy Germany should have pursued before 1914, according to Hitler, was to strengthen its continental power "by winning new territory in Europe, to which, at a later date, could have been added colonial territories within the limits of the naturally attainable." Instead, the German Empire, having acquired colonies overseas, engaged in a naval race with Britain, thus destroying the possibility of an Anglo-German alliance, which alone would have permitted Germany's "land" expansion in eastern Europe.

The territories lost in 1919 can only be regained by force of arms. Germany, Hitler says repeatedly, will never win back these territories "by solemn invocation of the Lord," or "pious hopes based on the League of Nations," or "the volubility of parliamentary gasbags," or "flaming protests," but "by a sharpened sword; that is, by bloody struggle." War for the re-

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covery of the German *irredenta* was thus not excluded by *Mein Kampf*.

But neither could Germany regain its lost territories unless it recovered its political power and independence. "The liberation of suppressed sections of a nation that have been torn away, or of whole provinces, never takes place as the result of a desire on the part of the suppressed, or of a protest of those who remained behind. It is achieved solely by means of power" on the part of the fatherland. The task of Germany's domestic policy is "to forge the mighty sword" which will reconquer the ground lost at Versailles. "To see that this work is done in security and to look for companions in arms are the task of its foreign policy."

Hitler, however, was not planning to be satisfied with restoration of Germany's pre-war frontiers. "The demand for the re-establishment of our frontiers of 1914 is political nonsense . . . and in its consequences would seem even a political crime. The frontiers of 1914 were far from logical. For they were in reality not at all complete in comprising all the people of German nationality nor reasonable with regard to their military-geographical significance. They were not the result of a well-considered plan but were frontiers momentarily reached in a by no means final political struggle. They were partly the result of a mere game of chance."

The aim of Nazi foreign policy was "to secure the soil due to the German people on this earth" — without

specifications as to the extent of the territory thus mystically claimed. "This is the only policy which justifies before God and our German posterity the sacrifice of blood." Germany "would thus be liberated from the fear of encirclement which has haunted it throughout history. Thus would come freedom forever from the danger of either perishing or becoming a slave nation in the service of others."

Expansion will not be achieved without fighting. "As our ancestors . . . fought with their lives for the soil on which today we live, so in future no soil, and with it the life of our peoples, will be assigned to us by the grace of a nation, but only by the power of a victorious sword." There are in the world "immense areas of unused land which only await the cultivator." This land "is not by nature set aside for a certain nation or race as reserve areas for the future. This soil is for that people which is strong enough to seize it and industrious enough to cultivate it. Nature knows no political boundaries. First she places life on this globe, and then watches the free interplay of forces. Then the strongest in courage and industry, as her favorite, is given the right to be Lord of Existence."

### *5. A Free Hand in Eastern Europe*

This new soil must be found, not "in some such place as the Cameroons," but next door, in Europe. Land will not be freely surrendered to Germany. "Here, however, the right of self-preservation comes into op-

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eration, and what is not yielded to gentle persuasion will have to be taken by the strong right arm." Hitler thus envisaged the use of pressure, by threat of force and propaganda, and appeal to force only as a last resort.

### 6. *Conquest of Russia*

The new territory was to be acquired in Russia "and its border states" — presumably the Baltic countries, Poland and Rumania. "We start anew where we terminated six centuries ago" — a flashback to the Teutonic Knights. "In this way we bring to an end the colonial and trade policies of pre-war times, and pass over to the territorial policy of the future."

Hitler's aspirations to Russian territory were reinforced by one of his associates, Alfred Rosenberg, a White Russian from the Baltic region, who in 1930 declared: <sup>3</sup> " 'From West to East' is now the command from the Rhine to the Vistula, 'from West to East' must resound from Moscow to Tomsk. The 'Russian' who cursed Peter and Catherine was a real Russian. Europe should never have been forced on him. In the future, after the separation of the non-Russian territories (the western provinces, the Ukraine, the Caucasus), he will have to be content to transfer his center of gravity to Asia. Only in this way will he perhaps at last reach an inner equilibrium and will not constantly

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Rosenberg: *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Hoheneichen Verlag; 1930), p. 601. For a caustic Soviet analysis of Rosenberg's thesis, cf. Karl Radek: "Sovetnik s Kanatchikovoi Datchi (An Adviser from the Madhouse)," *Izvestia*, May 12, 1933.

oscillate between false submission and haughty pretension, will not deliver his 'words' to a Europe which has lost its 'way.' Let him turn his 'word' to the East, where there may be room for it, having first cleansed it of that mixture of the ideas of Babeuf, Blanc, Bakunin, Tolstoy, Lenin, and Marx, called Bolshevism. In Europe, which is alien to him and which he hates, there is no room for him any more."

Providence itself, said Hitler, had shown the way for German expansion. "In delivering Russia over to Bolshevism it has robbed the Russian people of its intelligentsia." The "Germanic directing class" had been superseded by Jewish Bolsheviks. As a result, "the gigantic Reich of the East is ripe for a collapse. The end of Jewish rule in Russia will be the end of the Russian state. We are privileged by fate to be witnesses of a catastrophe which will be the most powerful justification of the rightness of our national race theory."

### *7. Friendship with Britain*

Eastward expansion could be achieved only with the friendship or benevolent neutrality of Britain. "For such a policy there was, of course, in Europe, only a single possible ally: England. Only with England to cover our rear would it have been possible to begin the new Teutonic march. . . . To gain England's favor no sacrifice should have been too great. We should have denied ourselves colonies and sea-power, and have spared British industry from our competition."

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In forming alliances, Germany should remember that "an alliance whose purpose does not comprise the intention to make war is senseless and worthless." The consequences of war with the British had been terrible for Germany. But Britain was no longer "vitaly interested in Germany's destruction; indeed, the opposite is true: that British policy must increasingly tend to hold in check the unmeasured French desire for hegemony." Britain "does not want Germany to be a world power, but France does not want Germany to be a power at all; quite an essential difference!" Hitler also hoped to forge an alliance with Fascist Italy, which, alone of the great powers in Europe, was, in his opinion, not tainted by the influence of Judaism.

### *8. Hatred of France*

Hitler's objectives in western Europe were the friendship of Britain and Italy, and the annihilation of France, "the deadly enemy of the German people." "It does not matter who rules in France, whether Bourbons or Jacobins, Bonapartists or bourgeois democrats, clerical republicans or Red Bolsheviks. The ultimate aim of French foreign policy will always be the attempt to seize the Rhine frontier and to secure through the crushing and dismemberment of Germany the possession of this river." Here Hitler voiced the deep-seated anxiety of the German people, who could not forget that, in 1919, Marshal Foch had advocated the establishment of separatist republics in Bavaria and



the Rhineland. France, said Hitler, was not a homogeneous national state like Britain and Italy. It was permeated by "Negro" influence, and allowed itself to be used as a tool by world Jewry.

Alliances with Britain and Italy would "give Germany the possibility of comfortably preparing for the day of reckoning with France, preparations that would have to be made in any case." France would thus be isolated in western Europe. Every power "is our natural ally which finds French domination of the continent insupportable. No road to such a power must seem too difficult for us and no sacrifice too great if it only provides the final result of the possibility of overthrowing our grimmest hater, France. Our smaller wounds we can leave to the healing influence of time, provided we find a way completely to be rid of the greatest." Germany's grievances regarding Upper Silesia, the Polish Corridor, Danzig, Memel, and the South Tyrol were thus temporarily subordinated to the major objective of annihilating France.

This annihilation, however, was not an end in itself. Its significance was that Germany would then have a free hand in eastern Europe, where France would no longer have the support of its allies. "As long as the eternal conflict between Germany and France is being carried out, if only in the form of German defense against French attack, it will never be settled. Germany must realize that the will for life of the German nation must no longer be allowed to languish in mere passive defense, but that we must take up an active

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policy and throw ourselves into a final and decisive fight with France with the greatest of German aims at stake. Only then will the eternal and unfruitful struggle between us and France be brought to a conclusion; on condition that the annihilation of France be looked upon solely as a means of gaining finally the possibility of expansion for our people."

Hatred of France was associated in Hitler's mind with his hatred of the Jews. "This nation, which is becoming more and more polluted by Negro marriages and bound up with the aims of Jewish world domination, is a lurking danger to the existence of the white race in Europe. . . . The policy of France in Europe, goaded by vindictiveness and systematically led by Jews, is a sin against the continuation of the white race. It will one day set against this nation all the spirits of revenge of the coming generation, which will have realized that racial dishonor is the mortal sin of mankind. The French danger creates the obligation for Germany to put aside all sentiments and to give her hand to those who, menaced like herself, do not want France in domination."

### *9. Hitler on Colonies*

Although Hitler denounced the colonial policy of pre-war Germany, he did not reject colonial aspirations. He merely postponed them until Germany had completed its national development in Europe. "The German people possesses no moral right to colonial activity so long as it is not able to unite its own sons in a

common state. Only when the boundaries of the Reich include even the last German . . . does there arise from the need of its own people the moral right to acquire foreign soil. The plow then gives place to the sword and out of the tears of war springs daily bread for posterity" — a poetic phrase which may indicate that in 1923, at least, Hitler was not averse to fighting a war for the acquisition of colonies.

Hitler's instructions to the German nation were never to allow a rival continental power to arise in Europe. "Look upon every attempt to organize a second military power on the frontiers of Germany — even though it be only in the form of a state susceptible of military development — as an attack upon Germany, and think it not alone a right but a duty to prevent such a state from arising, or to smash it if it has arisen, by every means, including armed force. . . . Never deem the Reich assured if it cannot give all the offspring of our people a bit of land of their own for centuries to come." Germany thus had no choice but to destroy the military power of Czechoslovakia.

Hitler was intolerant of international organizations like the League of Nations. "The old German policy was wrongly determined by dynastic interests. Similarly future policy must not be led by universal sentimental drivel. In particular it is not our task to be the policeman of the notorious 'poor small nations,' but rather soldiers of our own."

He denounced pacifism, which he associated with Jews and liberals. "The pacifist, since he subjectively

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abandons himself completely to his ideas, will always ask first, what is objectively right, when his people . . . however unjustly and fiercely, is threatened. Never will he join the ranks of his own herd and fight with it! . . . If the German people . . . possessed that safe herd instinct based on blood . . . the German Reich would probably today be mistress of the globe. . . . Then perhaps . . . we could have attained what today so many misled pacifists hope to get by whining and blubbering: Peace . . . upheld not by the olive branches of lacrimonious hired female mourners, but established by the victorious sword of a master nation which leads the world to serve a higher culture."

Pacifism was not entirely relegated to the scrapheap, but it could come only after the German "master race" had obtained its place in the sun. "Indeed, the ideas of pacifism and humanity may be quite good after the supreme race has conquered and subdued the world in such a measure as makes it its exclusive master. . . . Therefore, first fight, and then, perhaps—pacifism. . . . Anyone who really and sincerely would desire the victory of the pacifist idea should back by every means the conquest of the world by Germans. For if the reverse were to happen, the last pacifist might only too easily die with the last German."

To achieve its objectives, Germany not only needs an army and war material. It needs "the spirit which renders a people capable of bearing arms." When "this spirit dominates a people, will-power finds a thousand ways, each of which leads to a weapon."

This conception of the military power-state, Hitler declares, is a return to the traditions of Prussia, which "rose out of a glittering heroism and not from financial operations or commercial affairs."

No methods are too inhuman to accomplish Germany's purpose. "When nations struggle for their existence on this planet and the question is raised whether they shall survive or not, all humanitarian and æsthetic considerations are of no avail, for conceptions of this kind are not of the world, but come out of the imagination of men and are bound to that imagination. . . . As regards the humanitarian question, Moltke already has explained himself on this point, taking the view that in war humanitarianism consists in executing it with the utmost possible rapidity, and that as a consequence the most brutal methods are the most humanitarian." Hitler thus set the seal of his approval on the "totalitarian" concept of war sponsored by German and Italian military authorities, and exemplified most recently by the war in Spain.

### *10. Germany's Retarded Nationalism*

*Mein Kampf*, like the theories of pre-war Pan-Germans, reveals one of the major difficulties of international relations. This difficulty, which only the passage of time can overcome, is that the various national states live in different historical periods, belong to different geological formations. Germany, retarded in its development by failure to achieve national unity until

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1870, reached only in pre-war years the stage of imperialist expansion from which France, Britain, and the United States were emerging in the twentieth century — although as late as 1919 France and Britain were not above acquiring territory at Germany's expense in the form of League mandates. Germany's territorial ambitions were neither more nor less legitimate than those of other great powers. It simply happened that they aroused the resentment of those countries which, weary of strife, wanted to digest their ill- or well-gotten gains in peace, without being disturbed by the German intruder. So a retired pirate who only wants to tend his garden and smoke his pipe might resent a young and enterprising buccaneer who rudely demands his share of the spoils.

To condemn Germany's imperialist aspirations on moral grounds is to falsify an already sufficiently complicated problem. When we say that Germany is violating treaties or acting like a gangster, what we really mean is that Germany is disturbing the *status quo* which the rest of us had once established by force, and is seeking to substitute its rule for our own. In opposing Germany we are not confronting vice with virtue. We are merely supporting one form of imperialism against another. This is perfectly natural and legitimate, provided it is frankly recognized. When it comes to a choice between the two, most people in the West would doubtless prefer to live under the form of imperialism developed by France, Britain, and the United States over a period of centuries — an imperial-

ism mellowed by age and at least outward adherence to the forms of democracy — rather than be subjected to the new, raw imperialism of Nazi Germany, directed at the subjection not of so-called backward peoples, but of other Europeans with a long history of national development.

The only alternative to some form of imperialism — international administration of backward regions for the benefit of native populations and not merely of one group of industrially advanced countries as against another — was forecast by the League Covenant in 1919. This forecast, temporarily at least, was belied by the action of all powers — victors and vanquished, democracies and dictatorships — during the fifteen years which opened in Munich with Hitler's unsuccessful *Putsch* against the Bavarian authorities, and ended in Munich with his victorious *Putsch* against Europe.

## II. FROM MUNICH 1923 TO MUNICH 1938



WHEN HITLER, in the comparative obscurity of his fortress prison, was weaving dreams of German empire, even he could not have foreseen that five years after becoming Chancellor of the Reich he would overthrow the balance of power established by the Versailles Treaty and remake the map of Europe in accordance with his own grandiose architectural plans. By outplaying the Western democracies at the old game of power politics, Hitler transmuted defeat into victory and restored to Germany the belief in its mili-



tary invincibility, the loss of which had most wounded it at Versailles.

### *1. Liquidating the Peace Settlement*

Hitler's spectacular rise to power crystallized tendencies which had been at work in Europe during the post-war years, and precipitated far-reaching diplomatic realignments culminating in the Munich four-power accord. Post-war ferment was due both to growing dissatisfaction with the terms of the settlement reached at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, and to fear on the part of the victors that the vanquished might attempt to revise this settlement by force.

The peace treaties of Versailles, Saint-Germain, Trianon, and Neuilly, which disposed of the fate of Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria, were intended to end once and for all the danger that German militarism, aided by Magyar nationalism, would create the *Mitteleuropa* of Pan-German dreams by subjugating non-German peoples, especially the Slavs of eastern Europe and the Balkans. Out of the ruins of the Hohenzollern, Habsburg, and Romanov empires emerged new or enlarged Slav states — Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia — which, with the support of France and Rumania, were determined to prevent restoration of German and Magyar domination in that region.

The terms of the peace treaties had been dictated not only by the belief that German militarism was a menace to world peace, or by secret agreements among the

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Allies regarding territorial gains at Germany's expense. They had been dictated also by the poignant desire of all peoples to create a basis for permanent peace; by the conviction that national groups should be given an opportunity for "self-determination"; and by the hope that out of the shambles of the World War would arise an international organization in which all states, no matter how weak or small, would co-operate on an equal basis, and adjust their differences by peaceful means.

These ideals, which found expression in the League Covenant incorporated in each of the peace treaties, fell far short of realization during the post-war years. The peace settlement disillusioned many people in the Allied states who had hoped to found a new world on the ruins of the old; aroused profound resentment in the defeated countries; and fostered acute nationalist movements, the most dynamic of which was German Nazism. The political frontiers traced in the name of "self-determination" had failed, in many cases, to take ethnic and economic interests into consideration, and had left in several of the victorious states considerable national minorities which demanded reunion with their defeated motherlands — Germans in Poland and Czechoslovakia, Hungarians in Czechoslovakia and Rumania. Parallel with these new frontiers rose new tariff walls, which hampered all efforts at post-war economic reconstruction and increased the trend toward economic nationalism. The burden of reparation and war debts weighed heavily on both victors and van-

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quished. The failure of the Disarmament Conference to reduce the armaments of victor countries increased the restlessness of the defeated powers, which demanded arms equality. Nor was any real effort made by the League of Nations to solve the major political and economic problems created by the peace settlement.

While the World War Allies never attempted to reconsider the peace settlement as a whole, many of its provisions were abandoned or gradually modified. These various modifications, however, left untouched the crucial question of territorial revision which divided Europe into two camps: that of the revisionist powers — Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, and Hungary, supported after 1922 by Fascist Italy; and that of the powers which insisted on preservation of the territorial *status quo* — France, Poland, and the Little Entente, backed after 1933 by the Soviet Union.

### A·FRANCE AND THE STATUS QUO

The post-war policy of France, twice invaded by Germany in forty years, was dominated by the ardent desire to achieve security, which to all French statesmen, from Poincaré to Herriot, had meant security against forcible overthrow of the territorial arrangements prescribed by the peace treaties. An overwhelming majority of French opinion believed that security had to precede disarmament and treaty revision.

France first hoped to achieve security by obtaining

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guarantees of the European *status quo* from Britain and the United States. In identical treaties concluded with France in 1919, Britain and the United States each undertook to come to France's assistance in case of unprovoked aggression by Germany. The United States, however, failed to ratify the Franco-American treaty, and the Franco-British agreement, contingent on American participation in the proposed guarantees, became a dead letter.

Disappointed by the reluctance of the Anglo-Saxon countries to underwrite the European *status quo*, France next sought to re-establish that counterweight to German expansion in the east which it had lost in 1918 when the Soviet government denounced all Czarist treaties, including the Franco-Russian alliance. This counterweight France found in the friendship of countries along Germany's eastern border which either owed their existence to the peace settlement — Poland and Czechoslovakia — or had acquired substantial territory at the expense of the defeated powers — Rumania and Yugoslavia. Between 1921 and 1927 France concluded treaties in eastern Europe designed to forestall all attempts by Germany, Austria, and Hungary to alter the *status quo*. These treaties — which only in the case of Poland took the form of a military alliance — were accompanied by French financial and military assistance. France's new allies floated loans in Paris, and obtained credits both from the French government and from French armament-manufacturers, notably Schneider-Creusot, who invested money in the

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Skoda armaments works of Czechoslovakia, which in turn furnished arms to Rumania and Yugoslavia.

Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia had meanwhile formed a group known as the Little Entente, by three bilateral treaties concluded in 1920-1. Their purpose was to maintain the territorial arrangements of the Trianon Treaty, which had settled the fate of Hungary; to prevent restoration of the Habsburgs, regarded as a threat to the independence of Czechoslovakia and the territorial gains of Rumania and Yugoslavia; and to protect each of the signatories against unprovoked attack by Hungary and, in the case of the Rumanian-Yugoslav agreement, against attack by Bulgaria as well. Rumania, in addition, concluded an alliance with Poland in 1921; and, owing to French influence, Polish-Czechoslovak relations, severely strained in 1920 when the Council of Ambassadors awarded part of the coal-mining district of Teschen to Czechoslovakia, showed considerable improvement after 1924.

The *status quo* system of alliances constructed by France suffered from a number of weaknesses, not the least of which was the distance separating France from its eastern European allies. The parceling of former German and Austro-Hungarian territories among several small and mutually hostile states, divided on political and economic issues, subsequently furnished Hitler with an easy opportunity to apply the doctrine of "divide and rule" in eastern Europe. The military effectiveness of Poland and the Little Entente states was limited by the presence within their borders of

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powerful national minorities which in time of war would have sought reunion with the revisionist powers. All four of France's allies were confronted at home by grave political and economic problems. The French Left, moreover, opposed alliances with dictatorial régimes like those of Poland and Yugoslavia. And meanwhile Rumania and Yugoslavia, whose agricultural products found no market in France, tended to gravitate in the direction of Germany, which provided a ready outlet for their foodstuffs and raw materials.

The French network of alliances was intended to operate within the framework of the League of Nations, which, in the hands of France and the Little Entente, became an instrument for preservation of the *status quo*. Instead of invoking Article XIX of the League Covenant, which provides that the League Assembly "may from time to time advise the reconsideration by Members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world," the League states concentrated their efforts on devising an effective mechanism to punish aggression after it had occurred. This emphasis on the punitive, rather than the meliorative, functions of the League increased the dissatisfaction of the defeated countries, which contended — not always without justice — that the League, by refusing to provide a method for peaceful political or economic change, left them no alternative except resort to force.

## B·GERMANY'S DRIVE FOR TREATY REVISION

France's attempt to achieve security through a system of alliances and to perpetuate the *status quo* within the framework of the League was challenged with growing insistence by Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria, whose demands for treaty revision won the support of Italy. Germany sought to obtain revision first by rapprochement with Soviet Russia; next by reconciliation with the Allies; then, after Hitler's rise to power, by unilaterally nullifying various provisions of the peace settlement under threat of war.

In the early post-war years many Germans, notably Walther Rathenau and Brockdorff-Rantzau, first German Ambassador to the Soviet government, opposed co-operation with the victorious powers and tried to develop an eastern orientation, hoping to overthrow the peace settlement with the aid of Soviet Russia, which was then isolated from the capitalist world and, like Germany, excluded from the League of Nations. This phase of German foreign policy culminated at the Genoa conference of 1922, when Rathenau concluded the Rapallo Treaty with the Soviet government. Another German group, however, believed that collaboration with the Allies offered the best method of securing peaceful revision, and urged a western orientation and fulfillment of the Versailles Treaty. The objectives of this group were represented by the policy of Gustav Stresemann, German Foreign Minister from 1923 until his death in 1929.

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Stresemann's efforts to effect Franco-German reconciliation were welcomed by the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, who hoped eventually to establish a United States of Europe. The principal achievement of their negotiations was the conclusion of the five Locarno treaties on October 16, 1925. Four of these treaties provided that all disputes between Germany and its neighbors — Belgium, France, Poland, and Czechoslovakia — should be submitted either to an arbitral tribunal or to the World Court. This provision, however, did not apply to disputes arising out of events prior to the Locarno treaties and "belonging to the past." The fifth — and most important — of the Locarno instruments was a treaty of mutual guarantee signed by Germany, Belgium, France, Britain, and Italy. The signatories "collectively and severally" guaranteed the maintenance and inviolability of the Belgian-German and Franco-German frontiers as fixed by the Versailles Treaty, and the demilitarization of the Rhineland (which the Germans continued to resent). Germany, France, and Belgium also agreed in no case to attack or invade each other except in "legitimate self-defense," in fulfillment of the sanctions provided in Article XVI of the League Covenant, or as a result of League action against an aggressor state. Finally, the three countries undertook to settle by peaceful means "all questions of every kind which may arise between them."

The mutual-guarantee treaty did not apply to Germany's frontiers with Poland and Czechoslovakia. At



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Locarno Europe was divided into two parts — the West, where ran the writ of the guaranteeing powers, and the East, which remained unprotected against Germany's future demands for territorial change. Nine years later M. Barthou, French Foreign Minister, vainly tried to fill this gap by an Eastern Locarno pact corresponding to that in the West, which Hitler denounced as an attempt to encircle Germany.

The Locarno treaties temporarily improved the European atmosphere. Germany was grudgingly admitted to the League of Nations in 1926, and the Allied evacuation of the Rhineland was completed five years ahead of time in 1930. German reparation payments, already modified by the Dawes Plan in 1924, were further scaled down by the Young Plan in 1929. No attempt, however, was made at that time to meet Germany's demands for arms equality, territorial revision in Europe and the colonies, and revocation of the "war guilt" clause of the Versailles Treaty. Failure to meet these demands encouraged the growth of nationalist sentiment in Germany, most vigorously expounded by the Nazi party of Adolf Hitler. The Nazis, who had won their first important victory in the general elections of September 14, 1930, contended that the German people had been dishonored by the peace treaties and "enslaved" by the burden of reparation payments.

Stresemann's successors — Dr. Curtius, Chancellor Brüning, and Chancellor von Papen — attempted to meet some of the demands of the nationalists and to

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win concessions from the victorious powers by inaugurating a "policy of prestige," as contrasted with Stresemann's "policy of fulfillment." The first step in that direction — the Austro-German customs union of 1931 — ended in a fiasco owing to the opposition of France and the Little Entente, reflected in the adverse verdict of the World Court. The "policy of prestige," however, met with marked success at the Lausanne Reparation Conference in June-July 1932, which provided for a final German reparation payment of \$714,600,000, approximately 2.2 per cent of the Allied demands in 1921. Germany also won an important concession on December 11, 1932, when Britain, France, Italy, and the United States recognized its right to arms equality "in a system which would provide security for all nations."

These concessions, made possible largely through the conciliatory spirit of the Radical Socialist Herriot government in France, failed to satisfy the German nationalists, who continued to press for Austro-German union, revocation of the "war guilt" clause, return of the Saar basin and the districts of Eupen and Malmédy (ceded to Belgium under the Versailles Treaty), revision of Germany's eastern frontiers, reconsideration of the colonial settlement, and recognition of Germany's right to rearm if the Disarmament Conference failed to disarm the victorious powers.

C. WHY ITALY CHALLENGED THE PEACE  
TREATIES

The success of Germany's campaign for treaty revision hinged on the attitude of Italy, which played an increasingly important role in post-war diplomatic negotiations. Italy not only desired revision of the peace settlement, but resented France's hegemony in Europe. Franco-Italian hostility was aggravated by failure to reach an agreement regarding various colonial disputes, by Italy's demand for naval parity with France, by French disapproval of Fascism, and by the struggle of the two countries to establish rival systems of alliances in eastern Europe and the Balkans.

Despite the fact that at the Paris Peace Conference Italy obtained practically all the territories it had demanded in Europe, the Versailles Treaty was regarded by Italians with disfavor because it had given Italy no substantial increase of its African possessions. Article 13 of the Treaty of London, under which Italy entered the World War at the side of the Allies, provided that if Britain and France should increase their colonial territories in Africa at Germany's expense, Italy might claim "equitable compensation" with respect to the settlement of the frontiers of its colonies — Eritrea, Somaliland, and Libya. By the Bonin-Pichon agreement of 1919, France rectified the western frontier of Libya and adjusted two controversial points with regard to the status of the Italian population in

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Tunis; while Britain, by an agreement concluded in 1924, ceded Jubaland and Kismayu to Italy.

This colonial settlement, which both France and Britain regarded as final, was viewed in Italy as but partial fulfillment of the Treaty of London. Britain, it was conceded in Italy, had fulfilled its colonial obligations "not magnificently, indeed, but sufficiently";<sup>1</sup> France's concessions, however, were thought to be in no way commensurate with the sacrifices which Italy had made during the World War, especially when compared with the territory France had acquired in Africa at Germany's expense. After 1919 Italy demanded that France comply with Article 13 by ceding the Libyan hinterland and the port of Jibuti in French Somaliland. France contended that such cessions of territory would endanger the unity of its African empire and would merely whet, but never satisfy, the colonial appetite of Fascist Italy.

Another Franco-Italian controversy in Africa concerned the status of some 90,000 Italians who had settled in the French protectorate of Tunis when France acquired it in 1881. The French government was determined to assimilate these Italians by means of gradual naturalization or, failing this, to neutralize Italian influence in Tunis by increasing the numbers and improving the economic position of French colonists. The Tunisian Italians, with equal determination, re-

<sup>1</sup> Virginio Gayda: "Le Due Questioni: la Tunisina e la Coloniale," *Giornale d'Italia*, August 14, 1928.

sisted all discriminatory measures and insisted on retaining their nationality, language and traditions — an attitude in which they had the support of Mussolini, intent on creating a colonial empire in Africa as an outlet for Italy's surplus population.

Another source of friction was the tendency of the two countries to indulge in increasingly bitter mutual recrimination. Italy claimed that France had always treated it as a second-rate power, had underestimated its weight in European politics, had blocked its development in Europe and Africa, had failed to recognize the important changes wrought by Fascism, and had tried to undermine the Fascist system by giving aid and comfort to anti-Fascist refugees on French soil. The French, in retorting, contended that Italy purposely misinterpreted France's every move in foreign affairs, that it cherished aggressive aims, and was not averse to military adventure.

Franco-Italian hostility was accentuated by the efforts of the two countries to establish rival systems of alliances in eastern Europe and the Balkans. France's post-war friendship with Yugoslavia alarmed Italy, which feared a Yugoslav attack on its vulnerable Adriatic coast. To counterbalance French influence, Italy established close relations with Hungary and Bulgaria, both of which desired revision of the peace settlement. Hungary, which had waged an unremitting campaign for return of the territories it had lost to Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia under the Trianon Treaty, feared Austro-German union if the peace set-

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tlement as a whole were revised; and in 1927 it concluded a treaty of friendship with Italy which became the keystone of its foreign policy. While collaborating with Italy, Hungary left the door open for negotiations with Germany, and often played the two countries off against each other. This deliberate balancing of Germany and Italy was due, in part, to difference of opinion among Hungarian leaders regarding the relative advantages of a pro-German and a pro-Italian orientation. Many Hungarian advocates of revision had been alienated by the Nazi theory of race superiority — a theory repugnant to the racial pride of the Magyars — and preferred to have Italy champion the revisionist cause.

Italy also developed cordial relations with Bulgaria, whose collaboration was sealed in 1931 by the marriage of Princess Giovanna, daughter of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy, to King Boris of Bulgaria. Not only did Bulgaria resent the peace settlement, but it shared, at that time, Italy's fear of Yugoslav aggression. Italy's simultaneous attempts to detach Rumania from the Little Entente by emphasizing their common Latin traditions proved less successful, and Bucharest declined to accept Mussolini's offer of a defensive alliance.

The most important move which Italy made toward consolidating its influence in the Balkans was the control it established over Albania. This control, inaugurated in 1925 when King Zog of Albania, having failed to obtain financial assistance from the League of Na-

tions, concluded a convention with an Italian financial group, was strengthened by a treaty of alliance in 1927 and a loan agreement in 1931. By the 1931 agreement Italy undertook to make a series of annual advances to Albania extending over a period of ten years and totaling some twenty million dollars. A notable feature of this agreement was that no interest was to be charged, and no definite date was set for repayment. Italy's financial aid to Albania was accompanied by the creation of an Italian company for the development of various economic projects in Albania, and the appointment of Italian civil and military advisers. When Yugoslavia protested that Italy's growing influence in Albania was a menace to peace, the Fascist government replied that it could not take the risk of allowing a hostile power to become entrenched on Albanian territory, from which it could menace Italy's Adriatic coast.

## *2. Diplomatic Moves to Block Hitler*

Hitler's determination to throw off the "shackles of Versailles" and restore Germany to its pre-war position as a world power created new diplomatic alignments, intended to block German expansion. The most important of these were the renewal of Anglo-French collaboration, which forced France to follow in Britain's wake; Mussolini's attempt to substitute a four-power directorate for the League of Nations, which hastened the formation of regional groups by the small states and caused Poland to drift into Germany's orbit;

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the Franco-Soviet rapprochement, culminating in the abortive Eastern Locarno project and the Soviet pacts with France and Czechoslovakia, which served as a pretext for Germany's denunciation of the Locarno treaties and remilitarization of the Rhineland; the consolidation of the Little Entente; the parallel formation of the Italo-Austro-Hungarian, Balkan, Baltic, and Scandinavian blocs; the reconciliation of France and Italy, which encouraged Mussolini to proceed with his conquest of Ethiopia; the resulting application of League sanctions against Italy, which alienated Mussolini from the Stresa front and threw Italy into the arms of Germany; and the consequent decline of Italian influence in central Europe, accompanied by Italo-German assistance to the Spanish Rebels and consummation of the Austro-German union, which in turn opened the way to Germany's bloodless victory over Czechoslovakia and Italy's agitation for Tunis.

### A·RENEWAL OF ANGLO-FRENCH COLLABORATION

The immediate effect of Hitler's foreign policy was to strengthen the ties between France and Britain, frequently estranged during the post-war period by their divergent policies toward Germany. France had continued to regard the Reich as its greatest potential enemy, to be restrained by alliances if possible, by force if necessary; while Britain wanted to let bygones be bygones and establish normal relations with the Weimar Republic. After Hitler's rise to power, France



once more, as in the pre-war period, turned to British support. A permanent basis for a new *entente cordiale* was laid in February 1935 when the two countries agreed to consult each other regarding the European situation, and proposed a "freely negotiated" settlement to Germany. This *entente* was strengthened in April 1936, following Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland, by consultations between the French and British general staffs; and expanded in April 1938, after Germany's annexation of Austria, by more precise commitments in the matter of armed forces and military supplies than had existed in 1914.

Despite these various mutual obligations, the London-Paris axis — whose formation preceded that of the Rome-Berlin axis — was often disturbed by fundamental differences in the outlook of the two democracies. Britain, with its traditional inclination to keep a balance of power on the continent and to make the best of any given situation, continued to negotiate with Germany and Italy, in the Micawber-like hope that something "would turn up" to check the two dictatorships before they had endangered British interests. On this point there was a measure of agreement between hard-boiled Tories, who preferred Fascism to Communism and would have welcomed a German-Soviet conflict on the theory of "dog eat dog," and idealistic Liberals, who believed that at Versailles Germany had been the victim of foul play. Both groups favored concessions — not to Italy, a World War victor, but to Germany — with respect to colonies and a free hand in

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eastern Europe. These views were not shared by those in Britain — Conservatives or Laborites — who feared that Hitler, having strengthened German economy with the raw materials of the Danubian area, would then turn his arms against the Western democracies. The most serious conflict of opinion arose over Germany's demand for return of its colonies. Many Britishers recognized the validity of Germany's claim, if not on economic grounds, at least on grounds of prestige. They feared, however, that once in command of colonies along the coasts of Africa, the Third Reich might establish naval and air bases which would threaten British communications around the Cape of Good Hope, at a moment when Italy already menaced the alternative route through the Mediterranean.

If Britain, at least theoretically, could still indulge in the luxury of hesitating between two alternatives, France, by its geographical position, was committed to a two-way policy: on the one hand, collaboration with the powers bordering on the Atlantic — Britain and, more remotely, the United States — and on the other, prevention of German hegemony on the European continent. In the zigzag course followed by the London-Paris axis Britain, on the whole, took the lead, especially during the first Cabinet of M. Blum, whose Socialist affiliations made him suspect to British Conservatives. When the Radical Socialists Chautemps or Daladier, who inspired no such fears, were in the saddle, France enjoyed a greater measure of initiative. No French government, however, felt free to adopt — in

Spain or Czechoslovakia — a course repugnant to Britain, whose friendship remained the cornerstone of France's foreign policy. France thus tended to follow Britain's lead at the very time when its eastern-European alliances — especially the Soviet pact — aroused growing misapprehension in London.

#### B. MUSSOLINI'S FOUR-POWER PLAN

Mussolini, bent on transforming Italy into a great power the equal of Britain, France, and Germany, advanced a plan for a Western concert of powers in March 1933, two months after Hitler had become Chancellor. According to his plan, Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, in a ten-year pact, were to undertake the task of European reconstruction; affirm the principle of treaty revision in conformity with the League Covenant in all cases liable to cause European conflicts; and agree that, if the Disarmament Conference achieved only partial results, Germany's right to equality of armaments would gradually become effective. This plan was supplemented by Mussolini's demand for radical reform of the League, to be effected by divorce of the Covenant from the peace treaties; substitution of the Fascist principle of hierarchy (*gerarchia*) for that of equality of all states, great and small; and changes in League procedure permitting more rapid and decisive action.

The French Cabinet of M. Daladier, who had long favored reconciliation with Germany, was not prepared for outright rejection of the Mussolini plan.

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Poland and the Little Entente, however, expressed vigorous opposition to the project, declaring that its adoption would substitute a dictatorship of the "big four" for the democratic procedure of the League. France attempted to reassure its allies by a counter-proposal in which it suggested that any action taken by the "big four" should be within the framework of the League; that any outside power directly interested should be invited to participate in the discussions from the start; and that no rearmament should take place in Europe. The tepid attitude of France and Britain and the vigorous opposition of the small European states prevented the realization in 1933 of Mussolini's four-power plan, which was not to assume practical shape until the Munich conference.

### C·REGIONAL BLOCS OF SMALL STATES

Alarmed by the possibility of a great-power dictatorship, the small European states counter-attacked on two fronts: they demanded continuance of the League in its existing form; and consolidated their position by the establishment of regional groups removed as far as possible from the influence of the "big four." Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, fearing that France might come to terms with Germany at their expense, established two permanent councils in 1933 to co-ordinate their foreign and economic policies. This program of co-ordination was hampered from the outset by the fact that Rumania and Yugoslavia, economically more dependent on the Reich than on

Czechoslovakia, were not in a position to abandon their economic orientation toward Nazi Germany.

The Little Entente states also tried to include Poland, equally menaced by Germany's drive for treaty revision, in their regional group. But Poland had been alarmed by France's apparent willingness to consider the Mussolini four-power plan. The Polish Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck — who as military attaché to France in 1922 had been forced to leave Paris under a cloud — was determined that Poland should not be excluded from any "big power" group, or abandoned by France to the tender mercies of Nazi Germany. Fearing that Poland might become a battleground in a war between German Nazism and Russian Communism, the Polish government adopted a fence-sitting policy and sought to conciliate both of its powerful neighbors. It consequently welcomed Hitler's proposal for a ten-year non-aggression pact, concluded in 1934. When the French government, following remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, rejected Warsaw's invitation to form a common front against the Third Reich, Poland became gradually estranged from France, yet avoided an outright alliance with Germany.

The Balkan states, like the Little Entente, showed a tendency to substitute regional understandings for international or even inter-European agreements, and to stabilize their mutual relations without reference to the wishes of the great powers. The leading part in this campaign for Balkan co-operation was played by Tur-

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key and Greece, which in 1933 ended a series of post-war controversies by concluding a ten-year non-aggression pact. They next sought to win the adherence of all Balkan states to a program of collaboration based on maintenance of the territorial *status quo* and the slogan: "The Balkans for the Balkan people." These proposals were welcomed by Rumania and Yugoslavia, which were alarmed by France's discontinuance, after the 1929 depression, of the financial assistance it had given them since the World War, and hoped to obtain the aid of Greece and Turkey in their struggle against Hungarian territorial revision. The projected Balkan pact was thus gradually transformed from an instrument assuring Balkan collaboration into one guaranteeing the *status quo*.

This change in emphasis alienated Bulgaria, whose demands for treaty revision were supported by Italy, and of Albania, subjected since 1926 to Italian financial control. In the Balkan pact signed on February 9, 1934, Turkey, Greece, Rumania, and Yugoslavia "firmly determined to assure . . . the maintenance of present territorial boundaries in the Balkans," mutually guaranteed the security of their Balkan frontiers. Although Bulgaria refused to sign the Balkan pact, it agreed in September 1934 to adjust its differences with Yugoslavia over frontier and passport questions, which had created constant friction in the past. In July 1938 the Balkan Entente concluded a pact with Bulgaria at Salonika, Greece, abrogating the military clauses of the Treaty of Neuilly and the convention of Lausanne

by which Bulgaria had been obligated to limit its military forces and to maintain a demilitarized zone on its Greek and Turkish frontiers. Bulgaria, in return, signed a pact of non-aggression with its four Balkan neighbors, undertaking not to seek violent overthrow of the Balkan *status quo*.

While the Little Entente and the Balkan countries united in opposing treaty revision, Italy joined forces with Hungary and Austria in resisting what it described as the Pan-German menace of the Third Reich and the Pan-Slavic threat of the Little Entente. Mussolini, at first enthusiastic over the advent of Nazism in Germany, grew increasingly apprehensive regarding Hitler's designs on Austria. While Il Duce advocated territorial revision for Hungary, he did not welcome Austro-German union, which might be followed by a Nazi attempt to seize the Italian Tyrol, inhabited by 200,000 Germans. He believed, moreover, that the sphere of influence he had created in eastern Europe and the Balkans was menaced by Germany's program of expansion to the east.

Mussolini consequently undertook to prevent *Anschluss* by all political and economic means at his disposal. He gave moral and financial support to Chancellor Dollfuss, backed by the Fascist *Heimwehr* under the leadership of Prince von Starhemberg. He urged Austria to develop its trade with Hungary and promised economic concessions to both countries. The last obstacle to the formation of an Italo-Austro-Hungarian bloc disappeared in February 1934, when Doll-

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fuss, at the instigation of Mussolini, wiped out the Austrian Socialist party. The Rome protocols, concluded by Italy, Austria, and Hungary in March 1934, were designed to foster the exports of the three states — Italy and Hungary undertaking to absorb a larger proportion of Austria's manufactured goods, while Austria and Italy promised to purchase increased quantities of Hungarian wheat.

France, determined at all costs to prevent Austro-German union, approved Mussolini's plans for economic rehabilitation of the Danubian region and urged the Little Entente to collaborate with Italy. The Little Entente countries, however, remained hostile to the Italo-Austro-Hungarian bloc, not only because of Yugoslavia's post-war hostility to Italy, but because Mussolini's championship of Hungary's revisionist demands threatened the territorial security of all three states.

The Rome protocols, renewed in 1937, failed to provide a solution for the agricultural problem of Hungary, which found that Germany offered a better market for its wheat than Italy (bent on achieving agricultural self-sufficiency) or Austria, where additional imports were opposed by the Austrian peasants. Nor did Austria find an outlet for its industrial exports in Hungary, whose manufacturers resisted Austrian competition. With the decline of Italian influence in central Europe which set in with the Ethiopian war and the formation of the Rome-Berlin axis, the Rome protocols lost what value they may have had in 1934, and at the Budapest conference of January 1938 Austria and



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Hungary showed a tendency to resist Italy's leadership in economic affairs.

Even the Scandinavian countries — which had had a taste of empire in their early years and found it wanting — discovered that a policy of neutrality abroad and social improvement at home offered inadequate protection against the Nazi storm. Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, joined since 1930 with Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg in the so-called Oslo conference, tried to develop a regional program of neutrality and low tariffs. When the League of Nations, once regarded as a bulwark for small states, showed its impotence to stop aggression in Manchuria, Ethiopia, and Spain, the Scandinavian countries felt they had no choice but to increase their armaments against the day when Nazi Germany might decide to wrest the province of Schleswig from Denmark or seek control of Sweden's iron ore.

## D·FRANCO-SOVIET RAPPROCHEMENT AND THE EASTERN LOCARNO PROJECT

The most dramatic effect of Hitler's victory on European diplomacy was the impetus it gave to rapprochement between France and Russia, which, as in the days of their pre-war alliance, joined forces in opposing German expansion. Until Hitler's rise to power, the Soviet government had denounced France as the stronghold of bourgeois capitalism and the self-constituted leader of capitalist states united in the League of Nations for an attack on Communism; while

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France, which in 1919 had urged the establishment of a *cordon sanitaire* in eastern Europe to prevent the spread of Communism, had shown little disposition to renew its ties with Russia. The Franco-Soviet debt negotiations of 1926 ended in failure, and in 1927 France obtained the recall of the Soviet Ambassador, Christian Rakovsky (since denounced by the Soviet government as a Trotskyist), on the ground that he had engaged in Communist propaganda. Franco-Soviet hostility reached a climax in October 1930, when the French government subjected Soviet goods to a system of licenses — a measure which immediately provoked Soviet trade reprisals.

The formation in June 1932 of a Radical Socialist Cabinet headed by M. Herriot, who had long favored rapprochement with the Soviet Union, marked a turning-point in Franco-Soviet relations. France, confronted by the resurgence of Germany and the possible estrangement of its eastern-European allies, decided that the Russia of Stalin, like that of the czars, offered the most effective bulwark against German expansion. This shift in French policy was facilitated by Stalin's determination to subordinate the principle of world revolution — advocated by Trotsky — to the task of "building Socialism in one country" under a series of five-year plans, the first of which was inaugurated in 1928. The violent anti-Communist speeches of Nazi leaders, and the diplomatic maneuvers which eventually culminated in the formation of an anti-Communist front by Germany, Italy, and Japan, were

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interpreted in Moscow as so many links in a movement to encircle and, if possible, destroy the "Socialist fatherland." In its efforts to resist this encirclement, the Soviet government relegated to the background the Third International, long a boggy of the capitalist world, and began to urge the creation in non-Fascist countries of a Popular Front, in which Communists were to join all anti-Fascist elements, including such former Communist bugbears as Socialists, Catholics, and "bourgeois" liberals. The U.S.S.R. consequently welcomed France's overtures, and on November 29, 1932 the two countries signed a non-aggression pact which had been initialed in 1931, but held in abeyance pending the successful outcome of Soviet negotiations with Poland and Rumania for similar agreements.

The Franco-Soviet non-aggression pact, which served as a model for subsequent Soviet agreements, provided that neither country would under any circumstances, alone or with third powers, resort to war or any form of aggression against the other. If either was attacked by a third state, the other promised not to give direct or indirect assistance to the aggressor. Each, moreover, agreed to refrain from any measure which would exclude the other from full participation in its foreign trade — thus preventing recurrence of the trade war which the two countries had waged in 1930. Finally, each undertook to abstain from interference in the other's internal affairs, and from propaganda designed to change by force the political or social régime of any portion of the other's territory. The latter

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clause was intended to cover both the activities of White Russians on French soil, and Communist activities in French Indo-China. This non-aggression pact was supplemented in January 1934 by a Franco-Soviet trade agreement.

France then urged its allies, Poland and Rumania, to follow a similar course. Poland, which had already concluded a non-aggression pact with the U.S.S.R. in 1932, prolonged it in 1934 for ten years, thus balancing its ten-year non-aggression pact with Germany. Conclusion of a similar pact with Rumania, favored by the Rumanian Foreign Minister, M. Titulescu, was hampered by Bucharest's demand that the U.S.S.R. recognize the occupation of Bessarabia, a Russian province which Rumania had seized in 1918. At the World Economic Conference in July 1933, however, the U.S.S.R. concluded a non-aggression pact with the Little Entente — Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia. Hungary, although still dominated by unpleasant memories of the 1919 Communist régime of Bela Kun, recognized the Soviet government in February 1934 and established trade relations with the U.S.S.R. In April 1934, after Germany had rejected a Soviet offer to sign a treaty guaranteeing the sovereignty of the Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania — all fearful of German expansion — prolonged until 1945 their non-aggression pacts with the U.S.S.R., and Finland followed suit.

As Hitler's program of foreign policy became more explicit, the Soviet government, in the autumn of 1933,

proposed the conclusion of a Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance. France was then reluctant to give the U.S.S.R. a pledge of unlimited mutual assistance which, on the one hand, might have involved it in Soviet controversies in the Far East and, on the other, might have proved incompatible with the Locarno treaties. It also wanted its eastern-European allies — especially Poland — to benefit by such guarantees of security as the Soviet Union might be ready to give. In the course of negotiations between M. Barthou, French Foreign Minister, and M. Litvinov, Soviet Foreign Commissar, it was agreed that the proposed pact should embrace all countries in eastern Europe, including Germany; that it should be concluded within the framework of the League of Nations, which the Soviet Union was to join; and that the pledge of mutual assistance should operate only in Europe, and not in the Far East.

This Franco-Soviet project was discussed by M. Barthou with the British government of Sir John Simon in July 1934. M. Barthou succeeded in winning British support for a Franco-Soviet scheme of interrelated regional pacts providing for territorial guarantees and mutual assistance against aggression. The most important of these was the so-called Eastern Locarno pact, which was to consist of two instruments: an eight-power treaty, signed by the Soviet Union, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, providing for joint consultation in case of crisis and immediate military assistance to any one of

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the contracting parties attacked by another; and a Franco-Soviet treaty by which the Soviet Union, so far as France was concerned, was to accept the obligations of the Western Locarno pact on the same terms as Britain and Italy, while France was to acquire, with respect to the Soviet Union, the status of a signatory of the Eastern Locarno. In other words, the U.S.S.R. was to aid France if the latter were attacked by Germany in the west, while France was to be called on for consultation and military assistance if the U.S.S.R. were attacked by Germany in the east. At Britain's suggestion, it was agreed that the undertakings of mutual assistance assumed by France and the Soviet Union should extend to Germany as well.

The British government officially endorsed the amended Eastern Locarno project, and expressed the hope that Germany would participate in the proposed pact. The German government replied that peace would best be served by the conclusion not of a multilateral pact, but of bilateral agreements adapted to "concrete circumstances," and that the best guarantee of peace "will always be not to prepare for war against war, but to extend and strengthen the means calculated to prevent any possibility of an outbreak of war."<sup>2</sup> Germany's objections were echoed by Poland, which, although accepting the project in principle, feared it

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum presented on September 10, 1934 by Prince von Bismarck, German chargé d'affaires in London. Great Britain, *Correspondence showing the Course of Certain Diplomatic Discussions directed towards Securing an European Settlement, June 1934 to March 1936*, Miscellaneous No. 3 (1936), Cmd. 5143 (London: H.M. Stationery Office; 1936), p. 9.

would injure the German-Polish friendship inaugurated in 1934 and subordinate Warsaw to the anti-German aims of France and the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union's admission in September 1934 to the League of Nations — from which Germany had departed in October 1933 — only confirmed the German belief that the Eastern Locarno project was intended to encircle the Third Reich.

After prolonged and fruitless negotiations had demonstrated that Hitler was not favorable to any treaty in eastern Europe for assistance to the victim of aggression, France proceeded to negotiate a bilateral pact of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union. This pact, concluded for five years on May 2, 1935,<sup>3</sup> was intended to supplement the obligations of the two countries under the League Covenant. It provided that if either party was threatened with or in danger of attack by a European state, they would immediately consult regarding measures for the enforcement of Article X of the League Covenant. Should the League Council fail to reach a unanimous decision concerning a dispute "likely to lead to a rupture," and should either France or the U.S.S.R. be then subjected to unprovoked aggression by any European state, whether a member of the League or not, the two countries undertook to come immediately to each other's assistance.

A protocol of signature attached to the pact limited application of the mutual-assistance pledge to cases of

<sup>3</sup> For text, cf. France, *Journal Officiel de la République Française, Lois et Décrets*, May 17, 1936.

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aggression involving violation of French or Soviet territory. It also provided that the obligations of the pact should not be carried out in any way inconsistent with existing treaty obligations — a reference to the Locarno treaty. The protocol of signature, moreover, declared that negotiations for the Franco-Soviet pact were intended to complete a security agreement comprising all countries of northeastern Europe, including Germany, Poland, and the Baltic states “neighbors of the U.S.S.R.” Since only two of the Baltic states — Latvia and Estonia — bordered on the Soviet Union, it was assumed that France and the U.S.S.R. had hoped to bring Germany into an Eastern Locarno which would have excluded Lithuania, thus avoiding controversy over Memel, a German territory assigned to Lithuania by the World War Allies in 1923.

The Franco-Soviet pact, like the pre-war alliance between France and Czarist Russia, was a defensive alliance. Unlike the earlier document, it was to operate within the framework of an international organization, the League of Nations; and it was open to adherence by other countries, including Germany. The pact was not a “military alliance,” as subsequently contended by Hitler. On the contrary, the efforts of the Soviet government to implement the mutual-assistance pact by precise military commitments proved fruitless; and tentative consultations between the general staffs of the two countries were cut short in 1937 by the execution of Marshal Tukhachevsky, regarded as the most brilliant Soviet strategist, who was accused of com-



municating French military secrets to the German authorities and conspiring with the German *Reichswehr* against the U.S.S.R.

A similar pact of mutual assistance was signed by the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in Prague on May 16, 1935. The annex to this document provided that the pledge of mutual assistance would go into effect only if the victim of aggression received aid from France. This provision was to play a decisive role in the Czechoslovak crisis of September 1938.

The German government, in a memorandum of May 25 to the Locarno powers,<sup>4</sup> declared that the Franco-Soviet pact was based on a hypothesis which would never be realized, "for Germany has no intention of taking any aggressive action against the U.S.S.R." Germany's principal objection to the pact was that France claimed the right, in the event of a Soviet-German conflict, to "decide unilaterally and at her own discretion who is the aggressor," and to take military action against Germany even if it could cite no report or decision of the League Council. The German government expressed the hope that all the Locarno powers would agree with it in recognizing that the Locarno Treaty could not "legally be modified or interpreted" by the fact that one of the signatories had concluded a treaty with a third party. At the same time, Germany tried to draw Britain away from France by submitting the draft of a Western pact limiting air armaments,

<sup>4</sup> Great Britain, *Diplomatic Discussions directed towards Securing an European Settlement*, op. cit., p. 36.

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long desired by the British government. While negotiations for an air pact proved unsuccessful, Britain concluded a naval treaty with Germany in June 1935, by which the Reich — in accordance with Hitler's desire not to challenge Britain on the high seas — undertook to keep its fleet at thirty-five per cent of the British navy. This treaty temporarily exorcised Britain's fear of German naval competition, which had darkened Anglo-German relations in 1914. British post-war fear of German superiority in air warfare, however, remained unabated, and was to prove one of Britain's greatest weaknesses in September 1938.

The French government, replying to Germany on June 25, declared that the Soviet pact remained "uncontestably" within the limits fixed by the Covenant and the Locarno Treaty. Locarno, it said, "is so much an essential basis of the general policy of France that no French government could have risked, by their own action, the introduction of an element of doubt with regard to it."<sup>5</sup> On July 5 Sir Samuel Hoare, who had meanwhile taken Sir John Simon's place as Foreign Secretary, said he was satisfied that there was "nothing in the Franco-Soviet treaty which either conflicts with the Locarno treaty or modifies its operation in any way."<sup>6</sup> A similar view was taken by the two other Locarno powers — Italy and Belgium.

Prolonged and evasive negotiations between Britain and Germany revealed that the Hitler government, instead of a multilateral regional pact in the east, merely

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

intended to conclude a series of bilateral treaties with "contiguous states" — thus excluding the Soviet Union. The situation created by Germany's attitude, in the opinion of the British Foreign Office, was "most discouraging" and "deplorable."<sup>7</sup> When Italy's Ethiopian campaign was already in full swing, Premier Laval of France, who had never been more than lukewarm toward the Franco-Soviet pact and had favored a direct understanding with Germany, made another attempt to reopen negotiations for an Eastern Locarno. Hitler's reply to these overtures was that Germany could not negotiate "at all pending a settlement of the Abyssinian question."

Pressed by the British for some positive proof of goodwill, Hitler told the British Ambassador in Berlin on December 13 that the Franco-Soviet "military alliance" directed against Germany "had rendered any air pact out of the question, for the bringing into the picture of Russia had completely upset the balance of power in Europe."<sup>8</sup> He referred to Russia's enormous strength on land and in the air, and remarked that "Berlin might easily in a few hours be reduced to a heap of ashes by a Russian air attack before the League or any other body had even begun to discuss the question of how to deal with it." The Franco-Soviet pact,

<sup>7</sup> Aide-mémoire submitted by Mr. Newton, British chargé d'affaires in Berlin, to Baron von Neurath, German Foreign Minister, on August 5, 1935. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> Sir Eric Phipps, British Ambassador in Berlin, to Sir Samuel Hoare, British Foreign Secretary, December 16, 1935. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

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he said, "impaired the efficacy and value of the Treaty of Locarno."

Mr. Eden, who had succeeded Sir Samuel Hoare at the Foreign Office in December 1935, following the Hoare-Laval deal on Ethiopia, made a determined attempt to reach an understanding with Germany. On February 27 he told the German Ambassador in London that Germany was taking the Franco-Soviet pact "too tragically,"<sup>9</sup> and tried to reassure Germany by declaring in the House of Commons that collective security was not synonymous with encirclement.<sup>10</sup> Rumors that the Hitler government would use the Franco-Soviet pact as a pretext to denounce the Locarno treaties and remilitarize the Rhineland provoked feverish diplomatic exchanges between London, Paris, and Brussels. The Belgian government urged France to strike a bargain with Hitler before it was too late, and barter permission to remilitarize the Rhineland for a Western pact limiting air armaments.

The Franco-Soviet pact was ratified by the French Chamber of Deputies on February 27, 1936. The following day *Paris-Midi*, a popular newspaper, published an interview given by Hitler on February 21 to a French journalist, Bertrand de Jouvenel. In this interview Hitler declared that the French and German peoples are "in no way hereditary enemies," offered to bury the hatchet, but added that the "more than de-

<sup>9</sup> Mr. Eden to Sir Eric Phipps, February 27, 1936. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>10</sup> Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 309, No. 35, February 24, 1936, pp. 83, 85.

plorable " Franco-Soviet pact " would naturally create a new situation. . . . France is allowing herself to be caught in the diplomatic web of a power whose only aim is to create in all the great European states a disorder from which she will benefit." <sup>11</sup>

The French government, once more headed by M. Daladier, offered to submit the question of the alleged incompatibility of the Franco-Soviet pact with the Locarno treaties to the World Court, and invited Hitler to clarify the basis on which he thought it possible to effect a rapprochement " which France desired as much as Germany." On March 2 Hitler told M. François-Poncet, French Ambassador in Berlin, that his *Paris-Midi* interview had taken place ten days before ratification of the Franco-Soviet pact, and that this "*fait accompli*" had changed the whole situation." <sup>12</sup> He said that he would soon acquaint the French government with " proposals of a precise character " — which took the somewhat startling form of the German memorandum of March 7, 1936. <sup>13</sup>

This memorandum — delivered by the German Foreign Minister, Baron von Neurath, to the diplomatic representatives of the Locarno powers in Berlin and

<sup>11</sup> *Paris-Midi*, February 28, 1936; also " Translation of the Important Passages of the Interview given by Herr Hitler to M. Bertrand de Jouvenel," transmitted by Sir George Clerk, British Ambassador in Paris, to Mr. Eden on February 28, 1936. Great Britain, *Diplomatic Discussions directed towards Securing an European Settlement*, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> Sir Eric Phipps to Mr. Eden, March 4, 1936. Great Britain, *Diplomatic Discussions directed towards Securing an European Settlement*, cited, p. 71.

<sup>13</sup> " German Memorandum of March 7, 1936," *ibid.*, p. 76.

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by German ambassadors in London, Rome, Paris, and Brussels at eleven o'clock on Saturday, March 7, the exact moment when Hitler began his speech to the Reichstag — announced Germany's denunciation of the Rhineland demilitarization clauses of the Versailles and Locarno treaties, and proposed negotiations for a twenty-five-year non-aggression pact in western Europe, to be accompanied or followed by the Reich's return to Geneva. While Hitler was speaking, German troops, described by the Nazis as "symbolic" and as "garrisons of peace," were entering the Rhineland zone, demilitarized since 1919, where Germany subsequently erected the fortifications of the Siegfried Line. Remilitarization of the Rhineland sealed the fate of Czechoslovakia, which henceforth could no longer expect effective military aid from its French ally.

The German memorandum of March 7 contended that the Franco-Soviet pact was "exclusively" directed against Germany; that the obligations undertaken by France in this pact were incompatible with its obligations under the Locarno treaties; that by promising to aid the Soviet Union against aggression in the absence of a unanimous decision by the League Council, France had gone beyond the provisions of Article XVI of the League Covenant; and that it had destroyed the political system of Locarno not only in theory, but in fact. The Locarno Treaty having "lost its inner meaning and ceased in practice to exist," Germany was no longer bound "by this dissolved treaty." The German government had consequently

remilitarized the Rhineland zone, "in accordance with the fundamental right of a nation to secure its frontiers and ensure its possibilities of defense."

In his address to the Reichstag on March 7 Hitler justified remilitarization of the Rhineland by elaborating his fears of Communism.<sup>14</sup> He reiterated his refusal to co-operate with Communism and to allow "the gruesome Communist international dictatorship of hate to descend upon the German people." He shuddered at the thought of the chaos which would be wrought in Europe by "the outbreak of this destructive Asiatic world conception, which strikes at all hitherto recognized values." He deplored the fact that, in spite of his repeated efforts to reach an understanding with France, the French government had concluded a "military alliance" with the Soviet Union, which he described as a "fathomless tragedy," fraught with unpredictable consequences. The introduction of this "gigantic empire into the central-European field of operation," he said, "destroys every real European balance of power." Hitler declared that Europe should be divided into two parts: the area of independent self-sustaining national states with which Germany is bound "a hundredfold" by its history and culture; and the area governed "by that intolerant Bolshevik doctrine which lays claim to general international rule, a doctrine which preaches destruction even to the most eternal and sacred values of this life and the life hereafter." While denouncing Communism, Hitler de-

<sup>14</sup> *Völkischer Beobachter*, March 8, 1936.

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clared that Germany did not want war, and was ready to make its contribution to European civilization and peace, provided it achieved economic well-being and political equality.

The essence of Germany's objections to the Franco-Soviet pact was not its alleged violation of the Locarno Treaty — which it is difficult, on purely legal grounds, to demonstrate — but its effect on the European balance of power. What disturbed Hitler was that, if Germany attacked France, the latter could call on the assistance of a strong military state in the east which had not entered into the balance-of-power calculations at Locarno; while conversely, if Germany sought expansion to the east, it would find the Soviet Union — which had no allies in 1925 — reinforced by France in the west. This explains, if it does not justify, Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland in violation of the Versailles and Locarno treaties. He wanted to remilitarize this zone and erect fortifications which would neutralize any aid France might want to give its allies in eastern Europe. Yet Hitler's argument that the Franco-Soviet pact had so altered the European balance of power as to relieve Germany of its Locarno obligations cut both ways. It could be argued with equal pertinence that, by accepting Nazi rule in 1933, Germany so altered the political situation in Europe as to make it necessary for France and the Soviet Union to conclude a pact of mutual assistance against the day when Hitler might decide to carry out the foreign-policy program of *Mein Kampf*.



## E·THE EFFECTS OF THE ETHIOPIAN WAR

Germany shrewdly struck its blow in the Rhineland at a moment when Italy, involved in war with Ethiopia, had been alienated from the other Locarno powers by League sanctions. France and Britain, reluctant to precipitate a conflict with Germany when they were already preoccupied with the Mediterranean crisis, had to content themselves with perfunctory protests.

Italy's invasion of Ethiopia on October 3, 1935 destroyed all prospects of the Anglo-Franco-Italian front against German aggression foreshadowed at the Stresa conference of April 1935, when the three powers had discussed Germany's introduction of military conscription in defiance of the Versailles Treaty. Premier Laval of France, who had the reputation of a shrewd if not always scrupulous horse-trader, had hoped to create such a front by collaborating with Italy on the problem of Austria. Under the guise of preserving Austrian independence — which had never been anything but a euphemism since 1919 — France and Italy both sought to block a new Nazi move toward *Anschluss*. Their collaboration, strengthened by Mussolini's defense of Austria against a Nazi *Putsch* during the crisis precipitated by the murder of Dollfuss in July 1934, culminated in the Rome accord of January 7, 1935.

This accord, which was intended to liquidate all colonial questions left pending by the London Treaty of 1915, consisted of six documents by which, in re-

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turn for Italy's pledge to consult France in case of threat to Austria's independence, France met some of Italy's demands in Africa. France promised to cede an area of 44,500 square miles bordering on the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and a strip of French Somaliland which provided Italy with an outlet on the Gulf of Aden. It also recognized Italy's sovereignty over the Island of Doumerrah in the Red Sea, giving the Italians a strategic foothold in that region. The French, moreover, adjusted the status of Italians residing in Tunis (whose children, born up to 1965, were to retain Italian citizenship); and gave Italy a share in the ownership and management of the French railway which connects Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, with Jibuti, a port in French Somaliland, thus enabling the Italian government to exercise a measure of control over shipments of arms and ammunition to Ethiopia.

The relative meagerness of Italy's territorial gains under the Rome accord as compared with its 1919 demands gave rise to reports that France, in addition, had given Italy a free hand in Ethiopia. These reports were soon confirmed by Mussolini's extensive preparations for a campaign against Ethiopia, which were known to the intelligence services of all great powers, but evoked no serious protests from France, Britain, or the League of Nations until the meeting of the League Assembly of September 1935, when Italy was ready for invasion of Ethiopia.

As Italy's designs on Ethiopia became increasingly apparent during the summer of 1935, the British public

displayed a moral indignation which was regarded in France as just another form of Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy. This indignation, none the less, represented a sincere reaction against a country violating its Covenant obligations by preparing to attack another League member. Such differences of opinion as appeared below the surface in Britain were concerned with motives and methods rather than ultimate ends. The British Conservatives sought primarily to check Italy's imperialist expansion, which they considered a threat to the life-line of the Empire and British dominion in Egypt. For them the League was an instrument which, if effective, might be preferable to unilateral action against Italy. The Laborites, opposed both to imperialism and rearmament, hoped by means of League sanctions to overthrow Mussolini and thus end the growing menace of Fascism. All groups in Britain shared the belief that if the League were allowed to fail in Africa, there would be no hope for collective security against aggression in Europe.

The memoirs of General de Bono, who commanded the Italian forces during the first phase of the Ethiopian campaign, reveal that, had Britain taken a firm stand against Italy before September 1935, Mussolini might have abandoned his colonial expedition.<sup>15</sup> But the only constructive measures taken by Britain to stop Italian aggression were its offer to cede the stony region of Ogaden to Mussolini, who told Mr. Eden — henceforth

<sup>15</sup> Emilio de Bono: *La Preparazione e le Prime Operazioni* (Rome: Istituto Fascista di Cultura; 1937).

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considered in Rome as public enemy No. 1 — that he was no collector of deserts; its proposal, in Sir Samuel Hoare's eloquent speech to the League Assembly, that the League consider the question of access to raw materials — which a League Committee has since studied without achieving any tangible results; and the mobilization of the British fleet in the Mediterranean without previously consulting France and other League states, whom Britain was meanwhile trying to line up for collective action against Italy.

Britain's sudden championship of the cause of collective security, which it had done much to weaken during post-war years, confronted France with its most painful dilemma since the end of the World War. On the one hand France, which had always demanded a powerful international organization geared to apply drastic sanctions against an aggressor — which was to be none other than Germany — could not but welcome Britain's desire to strengthen the League. On the other hand M. Laval, having promised Mussolini a free hand in East Africa in return for Italian assistance with Austria, was loath to turn League sanctions against Italy and thus jeopardize the existence of the only great power which was in a position to prevent Austro-German union. This division of interests between Britain, absorbed in Mediterranean problems, and France, which felt that its fate would be settled in central Europe, threatened for a time to drive a wedge between the World War Allies. Britain's leadership, however, rallied the Dominions and the small European

countries to the cause of collective security, which M. Laval was reluctantly forced to accept; and on November 2, 1935 the League decided to apply economic and financial sanctions against Italy, with the exception of several important raw materials, notably oil.

Italy, by now embarked on a difficult and costly campaign in Ethiopia, denounced League sanctions as an "unjust and arbitrary" attempt on the part of former imperialist powers like France and Britain to prevent fulfillment of its dreams of empire by applying, without previous warning, "two weights and two measures." When the League of Nations, in November 1935, discussed the possibility of an oil embargo — which, according to expert opinion, would have curbed Italy in three and a half months, provided the United States limited its oil exports to the pre-1935 level — Mussolini threatened France and Britain with military reprisals.

Brought face to face with the risk that oil sanctions might precipitate war, the Baldwin government, which had not hesitated to send the bulk of the British fleet into the Mediterranean in September without waiting for a League decision, apparently suffered an attack of nerves at the thought that Italy might commit a "mad-dog act" and that Britain might be left alone to bear the brunt of Italian retaliation. This prospect seemed particularly disturbing at a time when trouble was brewing in Egypt, Japan had resumed its drive in China, threatening British interests, and Germany was demanding a free hand in eastern Europe as well as re-

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turn of its colonies. Britain's perplexities were increased rather than diminished by indications that the United States, whose possible non-participation had previously justified the League's reluctance to embargo oil, might unilaterally limit oil exports to Italy.

Britain, according to its Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, had no fear of Italian threats so far as its own defense was concerned. What it feared "was something very different—that an isolated attack of this kind launched upon one power without, it may be, the full support of the other powers, would . . . almost inevitably lead to the dissolution of the League." Yet Sir Samuel made it abundantly clear that Britain's apprehension was aroused primarily not by concern for the League's future, but by the failure of other League powers to take military precautions against Italian aggression.

"Not a ship, not a machine, not a man," he told the House of Commons on December 19, 1935, had been moved by League states, which contented themselves with protestations of loyalty to the Covenant. Without active co-operation, Sir Samuel declared, collective security was impossible, nor was it possible to have "a more than unsatisfactory peace. You cannot have a 100 per cent peace if you have only got 5 per cent co-operation that goes to the making of it."

Under the circumstances, Britain and France believed that a "negotiated" peace would prove less disastrous for the world than the complete collapse of one or other belligerent, which might either lead to Com-

munism in Italy — opposed by British financial circles — or else encourage Fascism to expand in Africa at French and British expense. Neither eventuality was calculated to reassure the Western democracies, which agreed that the real foe of European peace was not Italy, but Germany. Their dilemma was that every concession made by League powers to end war in Ethiopia and bring Italy back into the European concert would merely convince the Nazis that aggression is its own reward. Faced by this complex situation, Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Laval, while paying lip-service to the League, drafted a peace plan on December 8, 1935, providing for a substantial cession of Ethiopian territory to Italy.

Prompt repudiation of the Hoare-Laval deal by public opinion in Britain, and to a lesser degree in other countries, forced the resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare, and Prime Minister Baldwin's admission that the proposals were "absolutely and completely dead." Britain and France, however, made no attempt to apply oil sanctions, and in May 1936 a victorious Italy imposed on prostrate Ethiopia a territorial settlement far in excess of the terms envisaged by the Hoare-Laval deal.

Meanwhile Italy, confronted with the almost unanimous opposition of European League powers, had concentrated its efforts on attainment of economic self-sufficiency, and in its bitterness had renounced all further collaboration with the Western democracies. Overcoming his fear of Austro-German union and his personal distaste for Hitler, Mussolini turned to the

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only country in Europe which had ostentatiously remained Italy's friend in this dark hour. Through his son-in-law and Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, an outspoken admirer of Nazi methods, he opened negotiations with Germany, which led to the formation of the Rome-Berlin axis at Berchtesgaden in September 1936. At that time, apparently, the two Cæsars divided Europe into spheres of influence — central Europe being assigned to Germany, the Mediterranean to Italy. This division of the spoils recalls Bismarck's decision, following his victory over France in 1870, to divert the French from Alsace-Lorraine and drive a wedge between France and Italy by encouraging Jules Ferry to seek compensation in Tunis — already coveted at that time by Italy. The formation of the Rome-Berlin axis was followed in 1937 by Italy's decision to join the German-Japanese pact of 1936 against Communism. Yet, despite the outward effusions of regimented crowds, the Italians, who had never had much love for Germany, found it hard to stomach this new friendship with Hitler; while the Germans, in turn, could not forget 1915, when Italy's "sacred egoism" caused it to desert the Triple Alliance.

## F·INTERVENTION IN SPAIN

Profiting by Italy's isolation during the Ethiopian war, Hitler skillfully diverted Mussolini from central Europe to the Mediterranean. Having announced that, after Ethiopia, he had no further territorial ambitions, Mussolini, with Hitler's aid, intervened in Spain in



1936. In return for military aid rendered to the Spanish Rebels led by General Franco, the Fascist dictatorships obtained strategic footholds in Spain and Morocco, from which they could threaten Britain's life-line through the Mediterranean and France's communications with its reservoir of man-power in North Africa. By intimating that all attempts to aid the Spanish Loyalists were inspired from Moscow and might provoke Fascist retaliation, Germany and Italy blackmailed France and Britain into accepting the principle of non-intervention, which they made no effort to observe, thus cutting off the Barcelona government from the aid it might have legitimately obtained in France, the United States, and other countries.

Under cover of the non-intervention agreement, which no country was willing to denounce for fear of precipitating a general war, the great powers openly intervened in the Spanish conflict. The Soviet Union and a section of the French Popular Front denounced the Franco rebellion as a carefully planned move in a Fascist drive against Communism, while Germany and Italy accused France and the U.S.S.R. of fomenting Communist agitation in Spain and of aiding the Loyalists, whom they described as "Reds" or "Bolsheviks." The Fascist powers regarded the Spanish conflict as a practical demonstration of the evils which would befall Europe unless it heeded the Nazi summons — "Europe awake!" — and girded itself under Hitler's leadership for a crusade against Communism. Their fears were shared by Portugal, traditionally Britain's ally, which

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in 1932, under the dictatorship of Premier Salazar, had adopted a corporative system modeled on that of Italy, and feared that a Loyalist victory would bring the triumph of Communism throughout the Iberian peninsula. France and the Soviet Union, meanwhile, believed that the Fascists were less concerned with the danger of Communism in Spain than with the possibility of securing strategic advantages and sources of raw materials. They claimed that Italy and Germany planned to encircle France with a ring of Fascist states, thus weakening its influence in Europe; obtain control of Spanish copper, coal, and iron needed for their armament industries; and secure naval bases in Morocco and the Balearic Islands.

Confronted with the prospects of intervention in Spain by the rival blocs of Fascism and Communism, Britain and France strove to follow a middle course. While refusing to sell arms to the Loyalists, they resisted Italo-German demands for recognition of General Franco as a belligerent. In Britain the Conservatives feared Communism more than Fascism; while public opinion, irrespective of party lines, was reluctant to make a clear-cut choice between two ideologies which seemed equally hostile to democracy. Having burned its fingers in the Ethiopian affair, Britain wanted to avoid further entanglements, and preferred to follow a cautious policy of "peace at any price" until it had completed its rearmament program. The Labor party and the trade unions missed no opportunity of criticizing the government's vacillations and ex-

pressed warm sympathy for the Loyalist cause, but regretfully reached the conclusion that non-intervention was the lesser of two evils.

More difficult and complex were the problems faced by the Blum government, subjected to pressure from both Right and Left. The parties of the Right at first openly supported the Spanish Rebels, and denounced expressions of sympathy for the Loyalists as subservience to Moscow; while the Communists berated the government for its failure to furnish Madrid with arms, and summoned the Popular Front to attack Fascism at home and abroad. Rising above personal sympathies and party politics, M. Blum assured his Popular Front followers that only a policy of non-intervention — detrimental as it would be to the Loyalist cause — could prevent Germany and Italy from coming openly to the assistance of the Rebels and precipitating a European conflict. As Spain's civil war dragged on, public sentiment in France decreased in intensity. The Right began to realize that Franco's victory might prove a threat to French security; while the Left, alienated by treason trials in the Soviet Union, lost some of its enthusiasm for Communism and began to doubt that a Loyalist democracy would emerge from civil war. The Blum government opposed domination of Spain by Italy and Germany, yet feared to provoke an incident by opening the Pyrenean frontier to the passage of men and arms destined for the Loyalists. Some French leaders thought it unwise to antagonize Franco, on the theory that if the Rebels won, they

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would bite the Fascist hand that fed them and turn to France and Britain for financial assistance. The governments of the democracies believed that Italy, far from gaining strength, was dissipating its military and economic resources in Spain and Ethiopia. They preferred to let the Spanish fire burn itself out rather than risk the danger of general conflagration by trying to quench it.

Granted that non-intervention was the lesser of two evils, why did Britain and France, constantly goaded to action by the Soviet Union, fail to insist on strict fulfillment of the agreement, which was repeatedly violated on both sides? It is doubtless true that the British government, hostile to Communism, purposely overlooked violations by Germany, Italy, and Portugal and obliged France, under M. Blum, to follow in its wake by threatening to withhold British aid in case of a Franco-German clash over Spain. But it is also probable that, as in the Ethiopian crisis, the two Western democracies were so dominated by the desire to avoid war that, rather than risk collision with Hitler and Mussolini, they preferred to tolerate clandestine Fascist aid to the Rebels, which in turn encouraged Soviet aid to the Loyalists. This temporizing policy, far from satisfying the aspirations of the Fascist dictatorships, merely strengthened their belief that the democracies were either too weak or too weary of war to fight except when invaded, and would place no obstacles in the path of Germany's expansion to the east or Italy's ambitions in the Mediterranean.

The Ethiopian campaign and, to a much lesser degree, the Spanish civil war, which aroused little enthusiasm in Italy, gave Mussolini an opportunity to divert public opinion from economic difficulties to foreign adventures, which promised not only increase in territory and raw materials but added prestige on the international scene. This move was not without effect among a people which has long resented the opinion held abroad — especially in Britain — that Italy is a romantic country of picturesque gondoliers and archæological remains, incapable of displaying the military prowess and talents for colonization regarded by the British as their peculiar appanage. The failure of rich and complacent Britain to admit that Fascism might prove successful in raising Italy from the status of a “proletarian” among nations to that of a “capitalist” power like the British Empire, rankled in the minds of many Italians, and lay at the bottom of their desire to show off at Britain’s expense in Africa and the Mediterranean.

### *3. Hitler’s Counter-Attack*

Having transformed Italy into what the German press described as a “Mediterranean-African empire,” Hitler was able to direct the full force of his counter-attack on the Western democracies and their eastern-European satellites, without fear that Italy might obstruct his designs in central Europe. In February 1938, after purging the army and the Foreign Office

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of conservative elements like General von Blomberg and Baron von Neurath, who had counseled moderation and opposed military adventures, Hitler was free to realize his lifelong desire to unite Austria and the Reich in a Greater Germany.

Profiting by the anxious suspense resulting from the Nazi purge, Britain attempted to come to terms with both Germany and Italy. To Italy it offered a general settlement liquidating Mediterranean and African disputes, and to Germany a compromise safeguarding Austria's independence, for which the Reich was to be eventually rewarded with colonial concessions. This initiative encouraged the countries of eastern Europe to believe that Britain, having achieved a measure of rearmament and resumed international lending, was on the point of replacing France as a bulwark against German expansion.

While the British Cabinet appeared to be agreed regarding the necessity of concessions to Germany and Italy, it was split on the pace of negotiations with the Fascist dictatorships. Prime Minister Chamberlain advocated immediate payment on account, before Hitler had had a chance to throw Europe into turmoil, while Foreign Minister Eden urged caution in making concessions without first obtaining adequate guarantees of good behavior from would-be aggressors. Italy, having spent its military and economic resources on far-flung expeditions, seemed ready to taper off its foreign commitments and concentrate its strength in central Europe and the Balkans, where its aspirations clashed

with those of Germany. Mussolini, it was said, would withdraw from Spain, provided some method were found of presenting his withdrawal as a triumph for Italian diplomacy. Britain, in turn, was ready to facilitate this process of face-saving by promising belligerent rights for Franco, recognition of Ethiopia, and possibly a loan for development of Italy's new empire.

#### A·THE AUSTRIAN DÉBÂCLE

Apparently at the suggestion of Mussolini, who, following the formation of the Rome-Berlin axis, no longer felt in a position to obstruct *Anschluss*, Chancellor Schuschnigg of Austria accepted Hitler's invitation to visit him at Berchtesgaden on February 12, 1938. In the course of this visit Hitler demanded that Schuschnigg legalize the Nazi movement in Austria and include Austrian Nazis in his Cabinet, threatening renewal of Nazi terrorism and even German intervention by force of arms in case of noncompliance. Fresh from this Berchtesgaden interview, Hitler went before the Reichstag on February 20 and delivered a defiant speech rejecting any suggestion that Germany should make concessions in the interest of European peace. "I cannot allow our natural claims," he said, "to be coupled with political business." While declaring that Germany would impose upon itself "wise moderation in its interests and demands," he made it clear that the Reich would be sole judge of the justice of its own claim, and called for the incorporation of ten million "border-state Germans" in the Third Reich — thus

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foreshadowing annexation of Austria and Sudetenland.

Hitler's Wagnerian speech served as an apt accompaniment for Britain's retreat from eastern Europe, which after Berchtesgaden assumed the proportions of a rout. The Chamberlain government, which only a week before had used its influence in the Danubian region to encourage resistance to Nazi pressure, sacrificed not only Austria, but Foreign Secretary Eden, in the hope of avoiding war with the dictators. Faced with the possibility of war on three fronts — central Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Far East — Mr. Chamberlain apparently decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and that protection of possessions overseas was worth the price of Austrian surrender. By this decision Britain may have temporarily gained a respite for its empire; but it lost what restraining influence it may still have been able to exercise on Hitler and Mussolini.

The Schuschnigg interview strengthened Mr. Chamberlain's determination to come to terms with Italy. The policy of the British Prime Minister was predicated on the assumption that, unless an agreement was promptly reached, the only alternative was war — an alternative no more palatable to the British than to the French or American people. The correctness of this assumption could have been proved only by putting it to the fateful test of challenging Hitler and Mussolini to carry out their threats of force, in the hope of calling their bluff. This test Mr. Chamberlain — like Sir Samuel Hoare in the Italo-Ethiopian crisis — was



unwilling to face. Nor was it possible to dismiss without serious consideration his argument that, unless Britain and France — which had received no promise of American assistance — were ready to fight, they would have to come to terms with the dictatorships. The real question raised by his policy was whether it would ultimately fulfill the purpose of avoiding a general war.

Undeterred by his failure to browbeat Schuschnigg into submission at Berchtesgaden, Hitler seized on the plebiscite proclaimed by the Austrian Chancellor to march into Austria on March 12 — one of his many fateful Saturdays — ostensibly at the request of Seyss-Inquart, Nazi Minister of the Interior in Vienna, who had called for German forces to restore order in an outwardly orderly Austria. Failing to obtain any promise of help from Paris, London, or Rome, Schuschnigg had no alternative but to yield to force. The *Anschluss*, legalized by a post-mortem plebiscite throughout Greater Germany on April 11, brought the German frontier to that of Italy in the south, of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the east. This plebiscite could not fail to gain the approval of the German people, whose national pride, crushed by the terms of the Versailles Treaty, had found peculiar satisfaction in the consummation of Austro-German union. By his appeal to German nationalism, Hitler astutely relegated to the background those economic and political issues on which some Germans, at least, might have conceivably opposed him. In the pre-plebiscite campaign

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Hitler emphasized not only his belief that he was the instrument of the divine will — a reference which indicated a desire for reconciliation with Austria's Catholic population — but his conviction that, by absorbing Austria, Germany had won the war it had thought lost at Versailles. The *Anschluss* represented more than the climax of Hitler's personal success story. It was Germany's vindication of its World War defeat, and the fulfillment of its century-long desire to rule Austria from Berlin.

The British government protested against the use of coercion in Austria, which, it declared, was "bound to produce the gravest reactions." France, plunged into a Cabinet crisis by the resignation of the Chautemps government, joined in this protest, and vainly tried to enlist Italy's aid in some common action to save Austrian independence. Preoccupied in Spain and Ethiopia and at odds with Britain, Mussolini was compelled to witness the creation of a common frontier on the Brenner Pass between Italy and Germany. The acquiescence of Il Duce, who had not been informed of Hitler's intentions until the last moment, was the price he had to pay for Germany's benevolent neutrality in the Ethiopian conflict. Having reformed the Italo-German alliance and annexed Austria, Hitler made a bid for the support of Italy's satellite, Hungary, by promising Budapest a share of the Czechoslovak spoils — thus hoping to re-create the German-Italo-Austro-Hungarian bloc of pre-war days.

## EUROPE IN RETREAT

### B · AFTER AUSTRIA — WHAT?

In five years, profiting by the blunders and vacillations of the World War victors, Hitler erected a bloc of Fascist states stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic, either ruled or dominated by Germany, which effectively separated Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union from France and Britain. Such aid as the Western democracies might have been prepared to render Prague had already been largely nullified by the expansion of the German air force; the construction of the Siegfried Line in the Rhineland; the practical neutralization of Belgium, whose territory Germany had promised in 1937 to respect provided Belgium did not participate in military action against the Reich; and Italo-German intervention in Spain. The "Berlin to Bagdad" road of eastward expansion was blocked only by Czechoslovakia, whose principal assets were its fortifications, modeled on the French Maginot Line, its army, and its mutual-assistance pacts with France and the Soviet Union. These assets Hitler was determined to destroy — by peaceful means if possible, by force if necessary.

What Czechoslovakia had to anticipate was not overt war, but the same subversive technique which had already served Hitler well in Germany, Spain, and Austria. This technique consisted in Nazi propaganda among people susceptible to fear of Communism, like the German industrialists and the Spanish Rebels, or among "blood" patriots, like the Austrian Nazis and

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the Sudeten Germans. Once fear or patriotism had been aroused and translated into action — ostensibly without German interference — then all that was necessary was to describe opposition to Germany's aims as "Communism" or "internal disorder," which Hitler, self-appointed defender of Europe against Bolshevism, must then intervene to subdue.

The advantage of this technique, from Hitler's point of view, was that it could be used without creating a *casus belli*. On the contrary, it placed the responsibility for outbreak of war not on the dictators, who by mere threats achieved their objectives with a minimum of bloodshed — but on Czechoslovakia and its allies, should they attempt to resist Germany. This procedure confronted France and Britain with a cruel dilemma: either resist, thus possibly risking war; or continue to negotiate with the dictators, in the hope that some formula might be found to preserve European peace — but always with the risk that conflict might eventually prove unavoidable.

After Austria it was difficult for the Western democracies to urge a "firm stand" against the dictators — even if such a stand could have been realistically expected from Britain, divided against itself on foreign policy and anxious to have peace at any price, or France, forced by lack of internal stability to follow Britain's lead in foreign policy. The hour for forming a common front against dictatorial aggression, which could have proved effective in Manchuria, Ethiopia, and even Spain, ran out during Schuschnigg's visit to

Berchtesgaden, when Britain and France demonstrated their reluctance to resist Germany unless their immediate interests were affected. After Austria, mere threat of force by Britain and France might no longer have called the bluff of dictators, who had heard them moralize once too often about aggression without attempting to check it either by timely concessions or by force. Nor was the economic weakness of Germany and Italy necessarily a deterrent to adventure. The very paucity of their economic resources called for a short war compounded of *Schrecklichkeit* — if war it was to be. This was clearly indicated by Mussolini on March 30, 1938, when he told the Italian Senate that war from the air must be conducted in a manner to “fracture the morale of the people” — as had been done, not altogether successfully, by Italian airplanes in Madrid. After Austria, it was no longer a question of displaying “magnanimity” toward Germany, or offering Hitler concessions on a silver platter. Hitler was helping himself without courtesy of diplomatic etiquette. The most that Britain and France could hope to achieve was protection for their own territories by the sacrifice of Spain or Czechoslovakia.

When the time for sacrifice came in September 1938, Germany could not be held alone responsible for the resulting crisis. All countries had contributed to it in varying measure: France and the Little Entente by their intransigent adherence to the *status quo*, which had prevented timely concessions to Germany, Austria, and Hungary; Britain by its reluctance to accept

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commitments east of the Rhine, and its unwillingness, until the Ethiopian war, to bolster up the League of Nations, whose members proved unwilling either to alleviate the causes of war or to punish the aggressor once war had occurred; the Soviet Union by its emphasis on class warfare and its dictatorial system, which alienated liberal elements in the Western democracies and gave a semblance of reality to Germany's campaign against Communism; the United States by its refusal to play in world affairs a part commensurate with its economic and political influence. Most important of all, the democracies, which at home had devised methods for effecting profound social and economic changes without resort to force, had failed to apply democratic methods in international affairs, using the full weight of their power to enforce the *status quo* on defeated or dissatisfied countries in revolt against the existing system.

### III. THE MYTHOLOGY OF POST-WAR EUROPE



#### *1. The Religious Wars of the Twentieth Century*

THE DIPLOMATIC struggle of post-war Europe was embittered by ideological conflicts cutting across national frontiers, which in magnitude and fanaticism bore a striking resemblance to the religious wars of the seventeenth century. The new ideologies of Fascism and Communism, which tended to fill the emotional void left by the decline of organized religion, soon manifested the dynamic drive and all-inclusive character of earlier religious movements. Both doctrines owed their

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origins to the teachings of Karl Marx, which affected Mussolini in the editorial offices of the Socialist newspaper *Avanti!* no less than Lenin in his Siberian prison. Making necessary allowances for the different social and political conditions of the countries in which they came to fruition, Fascism and Communism represented the urge of the lower middle class to complete the French Revolution — which had signalized the victory of the “Third Estate” over the Church, the monarchy, and the feudal aristocracy — by destroying, in turn, the privileges of the new capitalist class brought into being by the Industrial Revolution.

The revolutions of the twentieth century found their leaders not among the so-called proletariat — workers and landless peasants — but among the lower-middle-class intelligentsia, who had at least a superficial acquaintance with Marxism. Lenin, son of a provincial educator belonging to the merchant class; Mussolini, son of a blacksmith and a school-teacher, who had taught before taking up journalism; Hitler, son of a minor customs official, who had dabbled in painting and architecture and served for a time as house-decorator — all, in their different ways and contrasting national settings, had had a more or less conscious intimation of the elemental revolt brewing behind the outwardly stable façade of pre-war Europe. All were leaders not merely because of their personal gifts or magnetism, but because they voiced the aspirations and discontents of their respective peoples. All three were fundamentally hostile to the democratic ideas and in-



stitutions of the Western world which, for various reasons, they regarded as a thin disguise for exploitation: Lenin because international capitalism, personified by the great democracies, threatened the existence of the "first workers' republic in the world"; Mussolini because French and British imperialism condemned Italy to the status of a proletarian among nations; Hitler because the Western powers had inflicted territorial losses on Germany, and continued to block its eastward expansion and recovery of its colonies. All three had nothing tangible to lose and something to gain by the decline of the West, whose political experience had not been shared by Russia, Germany, or Italy. And all three challenged the Western democracies to translate nineteenth-century political liberalism, developed by a bourgeois élite, into the economic terms of twentieth-century mass production — contending, not without reason, that the average man is less interested in abstractions like freedom of the press or freedom to choose between rival candidates than in the immediate problem of a steady job, three meals a day, and a roof over his head.

Whatever its intrinsic merits, the argument made by Fascism and Communism against democracy was not wholly unjustified. The bourgeois élite of the nineteenth century, having achieved a victory over feudalism, doled out only a measure of economic advantage to the new class of white-collar workers, drawn by modern industry and bureaucracy from the ranks of the peasantry and urban proletariat. Yet democracy,

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carried to its logical conclusion, should be not a class, but a mass movement. It can achieve its full fruition only if the masses are provided — not with equal incomes, which no system, not even that of the Soviet Union, can or expects to provide — but with equal opportunities for education and freedom from rigid class stratification. Democracy, if still in imperfect form, may be said to have been achieved in France, Britain, the United States, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries, where the governing classes have until now been sufficiently foresighted to pay a ransom for their economic privileges in the form of advanced social legislation. Extremist movements like Fascism and Communism gained ground only in countries where democratic institutions either had never existed, or had been artificially superimposed on a foundation of authoritarianism.

In countries where equal opportunities for education and economic advancement were either withheld or only partly realized, and where actual power remained in the hands of a bourgeois oligarchy, democracy failed to fulfill its own assumptions and became vulnerable to attack by rival political doctrines, which undertook to carry out its promises by undemocratic methods. Where democratic institutions were artificially grafted on to autocratic traditions, without preliminary mass education in self-government, democracy merely descended to the level of mob rule, as in Germany and Italy, and devoured its own intellectual leaders, who found it impossible to reach a compro-

mise with totalitarianism. The paradox of democracy is that the more widely opportunities for political and economic advance are extended, the more necessary it becomes either to lower the common denominator, or to raise the general level of education. Once the tendency toward seeking the lowest possible common denominator appears, the way is open for the emergence of leaders who cater not to the intelligence, but to the animal appetites of the mob, as happened in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.<sup>1</sup> Intellect is already under suspicion even in Western democracies, where education and a long tradition of peaceful change by mutual compromise have cushioned the shock of social and economic conflicts. It is still less acceptable to dictatorial régimes, which thrive on anti-rationalism, and discourage not only skepticism, but even independent thought. The spread of democracy in itself entails the disappearance of subtleties and half-tones, and the adoption, in countries unprepared for intelligent mass rule, of those brutal and unvarnished methods which have so shocked Western countries in their contacts with both Fascism and Communism.

With the disappearance of half-tones, which make negotiation possible in the democracies, the new political doctrines, exacerbated by economic conflicts, leave their adherents a naked choice between two alternatives: "we or they," the righteous and the vicious, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the Trotskyists and

<sup>1</sup> For an interesting analysis of some of these problems, cf. José Ortega y Gasset: *Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company; 1932).

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the Stalinists, the Aryans and the Jews, the Nazis and all other Germans — a choice to be made at the point of a gun in terms of irrevocable black and white. And woe betide the neutral person or group who, on grounds of intellectual or moral integrity, attempts to follow a middle-of-the-road policy! That person or group, for whom the word “liberal” is the least of insults, is then remorselessly ground between the upper and the nether millstone. In Germany and Italy, as in Russia, there is but one slogan: “He who is not with us is against us!” So in religious wars of the seventeenth century the Church knew only two categories of human beings — believers, who were worthy recipients of lay and ecclesiastical favors, and heretics, who had no alternative but to be burned at the stake.

Disastrous as this mentality had proved in centuries when no section of the population could remain indifferent to the issues raised by religious conflicts, it proved even more destructive when joined to the acute form of modern nationalism set free by the World War. Every state, no matter how small, was rent from top to bottom by an internecine conflict between its haves and have-nots, waged with a bitterness, a violence, and an ingenuity for inflicting mental torture on “enemies of the people” which the Spanish Inquisition would have found it hard to match. This conflict respected neither age, nor class, nor past loyalties, nor family attachments, nor intellectual or economic achievements. Men, women, and even children were doomed to destruction if their racial, religious, or po-

litical affiliations seemed to challenge the dogma inculcated by the political priestly order of the day. The Russian Bolsheviks pursued not only their "class enemies" — aristocrats, bourgeois, priests, and *kulaks* — but members of their own party, charged with betraying the cause of the proletariat. The German Nazis attacked not only Jews, Socialists, and pacifists, accused of stabbing the German Empire in the back in 1918, but fervent Catholics and Protestants, who rightly saw in the new totalitarian faith a deadly menace to organized religion. This ideological war created the myth, in Germany, that Communism is a threat from which Nazism, bent on a new crusade, must deliver the world; and in Russia the counter-myth that Communism — which despises democracy — could alone save the West from Fascism. It confused the political and economic issues involved in the Ethiopian campaign, the Spanish civil war, the Czechoslovak crisis, so that ordinary imperialist struggles for spheres of influence, strategic footholds, markets, and raw materials assumed the proportions of a Nietzschean conflict between the forces of good and evil. It aroused the fear of conservatives in democratic countries that war with Nazi Germany might bring about social revolution which would spell the end of capitalism, and fostered the myth that this doom could at least be postponed by submission to Fascism, which in the long run is no less inimical to private capital than Communism. By dividing every state against itself, and all of Europe into rival ideological blocs, the religious wars

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of the twentieth century destroyed the possibility — for the time being, at least — of constructive collective action in international affairs.

### 2. *Collective Security — for Whom?*

By definition, collective security implies security for all — not merely security for the victors against the resurgence of the vanquished. Yet that was what collective security became in the hands of the League of Nations, dominated during the post-war period by France and its eastern-European allies. Collective security was regarded as synonymous with preservation of the *status quo*, and little attempt was made to alter the political and economic maladjustments, inherent in any society, which threatened to precipitate international cataclysms. The principal League powers — Britain, France, and subsequently the Soviet Union — acted like the possessing classes in the French or Russian Revolution, refusing to make timely concessions, and yielding only when open revolt forced them to effect a disorderly retreat from their intransigent positions.

Nor was the security to which the Western democracies paid occasional lip-service even collective in character. First France, Poland, and the Little Entente used the League to maintain the boundaries and servitudes imposed on Germany, Austria, and Hungary by the peace treaties, disregarding Britain's desire to let bygones be bygones and reach a compromise with the Weimar Republic. Then, when Italy had revealed its

plans for colonial expansion, Britain tried to use the League for the protection of its empire, with no regard for the interests of France and the Little Entente, which feared Germany more than Italy. While invoking "collective" League action, Britain did not hesitate to order unilateral mobilization of its Mediterranean fleet, without first consulting other League powers, and then subsequently justified the Hoare-Laval deal by the argument that these powers had not moved "a man or a gun." France, Britain, and the Soviet Union saw in the League not an institution dedicated to the achievement of collective security, but one of many weapons in their national armories, to be used with little or no concern for the needs and desires of the international community as a whole.

While attaining marked success in the fields of social welfare and economic analysis, the League, under the influence of the Western democracies, deliberately avoided all controversial political questions, which tended more and more to be settled outside Geneva by the time-honored methods of secret diplomacy that the League was supposed to have brought to an end. The Hoare-Laval deal and the Munich accord belonged to the old tradition of pre-war imperialism, not to the new tradition of Geneva. True, the League served as a forum for the public opinion of the world, aroused by what it regarded as violations of post-war international morality. The League, however, was not in a position to translate this opinion into action, because it represented not the indignant peoples, but the

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statesmen who had concluded the very deals denounced in Geneva. National canvasses of public opinion, like the British League of Nations Union ballot of 1935, had a greater — although short-lived — effect on the policy of governments than all the moral denunciations of Geneva, simply because, unlike League pronouncements, they were crudely calculable in terms of votes.

The League, its scope already circumscribed by subservience to the national policies of the great powers, was further injured by the excessive expectations of its less cautious admirers, who encouraged the illusion that all nations, upon entering Geneva, would leave their national ambitions on the doorstep and function selflessly in an atmosphere of rarefied idealism. These expectations disregarded the extent to which nations, like human beings, are and must continue to be affected by considerations of self-interest, and played into the hands of the League's detractors, who measured its every act by a yardstick they would never have thought of applying to domestic politics. And this at a time when the recrudescence of nationalism and the spread of new political ideologies complicated the problems of the League by removing from its orbit countries which believed, rightly or wrongly, that the democracies were using undemocratic methods in international affairs. The myths fostered by Fascism and Communism within national states were thus transferred to the international plane, and the League's supporters defined the issue in terms of democracies



(plus the dictatorial Soviet Union) versus dictatorships, contending that the League would gain more than it would lose by the withdrawal of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Yet that withdrawal automatically destroyed the possibility of collective action, except in the stunted form of a concert of powers determined to punish disturbers of the *status quo*. Such a concert of powers — which France, the Soviet Union, and the Little Entente were ready to organize as an international Popular Front against Fascism — might conceivably have proved effective in a struggle with Germany, Italy, or Japan; but it could hardly be regarded, without prevarication, as the fulfillment of post-war plans for an international organization based on the democratic principle of equal rights for all, both victors and vanquished. Here, too, the democratic assumption was falsified, first of all by the Western democracies, which then tried to pin the blame exclusively on the dictatorships by denouncing them as international gangsters — conveniently forgetting that, in the national state, order is preserved not merely by a strong police force but by timely adjustment of economic and social conflicts. By their failure to develop collective security into a two-barreled process, designed to effect peaceful change and, if necessary, to punish the aggressor, the democracies vitiated their own case for collective action against the Fascist dictatorships.

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### 3. *The Fiction of Non-Intervention*

The religious wars of the twentieth century produced, as their corollary, the doctrine of non-intervention on the part of the Western democracies. This doctrine carried to its logical conclusion — if not to its *reductio ad absurdum* — the democratic tolerance for all points of view, based on the assumption that, given time, valid ideas would eventually drive less valid ones out of circulation. This assumption was justifiable in states where the politically conscious and politically active elements of the population were more or less in complete agreement regarding the fundamental features of the social and economic order. The moment this agreement was challenged by the appearance of ideologies which questioned or directly attacked its basic premises, democracy was confronted with the problem of either tolerating their free propagation; completely prohibiting it (thus betraying its own principles); or undertaking a militant counter-drive in defense of democratic ideas. The last course alone offered a chance of success. Instead, the Western democracies, both at home and abroad, made no effective attempt to counteract the propagation of doctrines whose primary objective was the destruction of their institutions. This course was justified on the ground that democracy regards Fascism and Communism with equal repugnance, and prefers not to make a choice between them, for fear of dividing the democratic countries and the

world as a whole into rival blocs between which there would then be no possibility of compromise.

The doctrine of non-intervention — most glaringly applied in the case of Spain, where the Fascist powers were left free to give unstinted aid to the Rebels while the Loyalists were gradually barred from legitimate sources of supply — played directly into the hands of the dictatorships, which cleverly used democratic slogans to confound their opponents. The German Nazis won their way to power by constitutional methods, and repeatedly went through the form of popular plebiscites to confirm the unilateral decisions of the Führer, carried out under threat of force. The Soviet government described as democratic its 1935 Constitution, which undoubtedly contained an important bill of economic and social rights, but also legalized the monopoly of political power exercised by the Communist party, countenanced a violent purge of opposition elements, and, after having promised religious freedom, did not bar a renewed drive against organized religion. Hitler invoked the doctrine of self-determination to detach the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia by threat of air warfare, while denying not only self-determination, but the exercise of the barest human rights to racial and intellectual minorities within Germany. And both Fascism and Communism evolved a new concept of democracy, defined as the fulfillment, by ruthless dictatorships, of the desires they claimed to be cherished by the masses. This method of capitalizing democratic ideas for dic-

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tatorial purposes put the Western democracies on the defensive, since they could hardly deny the theoretical validity of the ideas they had themselves set in circulation, although painfully aware of the inadequate realization or outright perversion of these ideas by totalitarian dictatorships.

### 4. *The Insurrectionary Technique in International Affairs*

The fiction of non-intervention fostered the development of the insurrectionary technique in international affairs, which has ruthlessly broken through the defenses of normal diplomacy and military preparedness. This technique, with which the Communists were the first to experiment in the heyday of the Third International, is not to deliver a frontal attack on the class or national enemy, but to undermine opposition by what the Bolsheviks in Czarist Russia would have described as underground activities. It consists in discovering the weak spot in the enemy ranks — and no state or class is free from weaknesses — and in using this spot to “bore from within” until the entire structure, like termite-infested wood, falls apart of its own weight, without any appearance of outward interference.

This technique, perfected by Hitler, proved highly successful in Spain and Austria, and reached its apogee in Czechoslovakia. There Germany found first-rate material for the process of boring from within. With

its many dissatisfied national minorities, of which the Germans were numerically the strongest, Czechoslovakia was an easy prey to foreign propaganda. The country's democratic régime made prohibition of such propaganda impossible without actual overthrow of the existing political system, which in turn might have alienated the sympathies of the Western democracies. Czechoslovakia would probably have been less vulnerable if it had been ruled by a dictatorship — and experience has proved that Prague would not have lost much by the estrangement of France, Britain, and the United States. Poland, which was far less liberal in granting minority rights to its German or Ukrainian population, temporarily fared better than Czechoslovakia by reducing pretexts for foreign intervention. In addition to the political problem created by the presence of 3,500,000 Germans within a multinational state of 15,000,000, a difficult although by no means irremediable economic situation in Sudetenland made the German population, which in more prosperous circumstances might have thought twice before submitting to dictatorial rule, ready to accept the economic assistance of the Third Reich.

Having paved the way for the formation of a Nazi movement among Sudeten Germans, which could always be represented as a spontaneous expression of native discontent unaffected by influence or coercion from Berlin, the German Nazis encouraged Konrad Henlein, leader of that movement, to present increas-

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ingly drastic demands that the Prague government was not expected to grant. Concessions far in excess of original Sudeten expectations were wrung from Prague with the aid of the Runciman mission — which obtained no equivalent concessions from the Third Reich — but were once more rejected on the ground that they no longer corresponded to the existing situation, which by then called for separation of Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia, by peaceful means if possible, by force if necessary. The Nazis made no secret of their desire, not merely to bring 3,500,000 Germans “back” to the Reich, but to destroy the political and military significance of Czechoslovakia, denounced as an outpost of Bolshevism in central Europe. Yet the democracies, hypnotized by fear of German superiority in the air, by the convenient belief that Germans, too, were entitled to self-determination (which had been refused when the Reich was not strong enough to demand this by force), and by the German thesis that Communism threatened European civilization, were ready to surrender on Germany’s terms. Many people in France, Britain, and the United States had often wondered why the German Social Democrats had yielded to Hitler without resistance — why they had not used the armed force which the Socialist government of Prussia, for instance, had at its command. After Munich, they had the answer to their question. For at Munich France, and Britain, and inferentially the United States, bowed to the superiority of Nazi

technique, which had undermined democracy from within by confusing the issues at stake, exacerbating ideological conflicts, and threatening other states with the equivalent of concentration camps and firing squads at the slightest show of resistance.

## IV. WHY CZECHO- SLOVAKIA PAID THE PRICE OF PEACE



### *1. To Be or Not to Be?*

OF ALL THE countries in eastern Europe coveted by Nazi Germany, Czechoslovakia contained the largest German population,<sup>1</sup> and alone commanded sufficient military strength to resist Nazi expansion by force.

<sup>1</sup> Czechoslovakia, in September 1938, had 3,400,000 Germans (250,000 after Munich), as compared with 1,200,000 in Poland, 600,000 in Yugoslavia, 500,000 in Hungary, 800,000 in Rumania, and 200,000 (Austrian Germans) in the Italian Tyrol.



Behind the natural fortifications of the Bohemian and Moravian mountains, which constituted their historic frontiers, the Czechs lived free of German domination until the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, when the Kingdom of Bohemia, defeated by the Austrians, was incorporated into the Habsburg Empire. At the invitation of the Bohemian kings, many Germans had settled in the Sudeten region bordering on Germany, where as merchants, artisans, and miners they developed the resources of an area rich in raw materials. The Germans, however, regarded the Czechs as an inferior race of uncouth peasants, unfit to rule their "master race"; and some of the most violent Pan-German doctrines which inspired Hitler in Vienna stem from the Sudeten region, where Austrian leaders favorable to *Anschluss* like Seyss-Inquart and Cardinal Innitzer were born.

When the Czechs and Slovaks, during the World War, rebelled against their Austro-Hungarian masters and formed the new state of Czechoslovakia, the fate of the Sudeten Germans was for a time in doubt. If the Paris Peace Conference had strictly applied the principle of self-determination, it might have given them the choice either of remaining a part of shrunken Austria, under whose rule they had lived until 1918, or of transferring their allegiance to republican Germany. The Peace Conference, however, was moved not only by ethnographic, but by strategic and economic considerations. It accepted the French argument that the new republic — which France intended

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to use as a bulwark against German expansion — should retain its historic mountain frontiers; and the Czech contention that for centuries industrial Sudetenland had formed an indissoluble economic whole with the agrarian provinces inhabited by Czechs and Slovaks. American proposals to hold a plebiscite in at least one predominantly German area were set aside; and Czechoslovakia emerged from the peace conference with a population of 15,000,000, which, according to the 1930 census, included 9,000,000 Czechs and Slovaks, 3,400,000 Germans, 700,000 Hungarians, and 100,000 Poles.

### *2. Sudeten Grievances*

The most important and vocal of the national minorities were the Germans, who, except for a few enclaves in the interior of Czechoslovakia, were concentrated in the Sudeten territory bordering on Germany. Although neutral observers agreed that Czechoslovakia's minority policy was the most liberal in eastern Europe — certainly more liberal than that of Poland toward the Germans of Upper Silesia or of Italy toward the Austrians of South Tyrol — the Germans resented their position of national minority subject to the rule of the despised Czechs, and charged that Prague was pursuing a policy of systematic denationalization. The Czechs, according to the Sudeten Germans, discriminated against them in cultural matters as well as apportionment of administrative posts, government or-

ders to defense industries, and social relief. These grievances, not all of which were unjustified, gained momentum after 1929, when the Sudeten region, many of whose industries specialized in luxury exports like beads, glassware, and gloves, were hard hit by the depression, and suffered an experience similar to that of the British "distressed areas." While the Prague government could hardly be held responsible for the depression, and in fact sought to alleviate it by subsidizing Sudeten exports, some Sudeten Germans began to demand incorporation of their territory into the larger economy of the neighboring Reich.<sup>2</sup>

The moment Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich, the German press took up the cudgels on behalf of "blood" brothers across the border, concentrating its attention on Austria and Sudetenland. When the Prague government, in 1934, banned Nazi and Nationalist parties, Konrad Henlein, a young gymnastics instructor, formed the Sudeten German party, which, according to the Czechs, was subsidized and directed by Nazis from Berlin. Henlein paid frequent visits to Germany, and tried to enlist British support for the cause of the Sudeten Germans. He argued that, in a country with large national minorities, the traditional concept of the nation-state identifying the state

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of Sudeten German grievances, cf. Karl Falk: "Strife in Czechoslovakia: The German Minority Question," *Foreign Policy Reports*, March 15, 1938; Elizabeth Wiskemann: *Czechs and Germans* (New York: Oxford University Press; 1938); and Lord Runciman's report to Prime Minister Chamberlain, Great Britain, *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia*, Cmd. 5847 (London: H.M. Stationery Office; 1938), p. 4.

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with the dominant nationality is no longer applicable, and that any form of dictatorship or totalitarianism is consequently excluded. In his opinion, the best form of organization was a "nationalities-state," in which each national group would enjoy wide cultural autonomy on a "personal" basis, and extensive administrative autonomy on a regional basis. Many of Henlein's supporters did not, in the beginning, want to detach the Sudeten territory from Czechoslovakia. Pan-Germans in sentiment, they were by no means all irredentists.

President Beneš, who in 1935 had succeeded Thomas Masaryk, founder of the Czechoslovak Republic, acknowledged that Sudeten German grievances were not wholly unjustified. The Prague government, however, contended that it was dangerous to entrust the German population, whose loyalty was in doubt, with responsible posts in the administration or with the production of war materials, which were purposely diverted to Czech firms in the interior of the country, with resulting hardships for German workers and industrialists. It feared that Henlein, following Hitler's example in Germany, might use the freedom permitted by democratic institutions to disrupt the Czechoslovak state, and in 1935 introduced a form of "disciplined" democracy which worked to the detriment of the Sudeten German party. As a conciliatory gesture, however, the government, in February 1937, concluded an agreement with the three German activist parties — Social Democrats, Agrarians, and Clericals, all rep-

resented in the Cabinet—granting many of their demands and promising cultural autonomy.<sup>3</sup> This agreement was opposed by Henlein, who argued that nothing short of administrative autonomy could satisfy the eighty per cent of the German population which he claimed to represent.

The February agreement was paralyzed from the outset by the inaction of local Czech authorities and the resumption of Nazi agitation. Following an incident at Teplitz-Schönau, Henlein, on October 18, demanded immediate autonomy for the Sudeten Germans. Prague, in reply, postponed municipal elections scheduled for November 1937 in five hundred communities—a measure which aroused a storm of protests in the German press. The knottiest problem confronting President Beneš was how to combat the encroachments of the Hitler dictatorship without adopting its methods and thus betraying the democratic institutions he had set out to defend.

### 3. *Beneš's Dilemma*

Soon after Hitler came to power, it became plain to all who had studied *Mein Kampf* that his objective was not merely to bring the Sudeten Germans (who had never formed a part of the German Empire before the war) “home to the Reich,” but to use their grievances as a

<sup>3</sup> For details on this and other attempts to meet Sudeten German demands before Hitler's Nuremberg speech of September 12, 1938, cf. Paul B. Taylor: “Partition of Czechoslovakia,” *Foreign Policy Reports*, November 15, 1938.

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pretext for the destruction of Czechoslovakia, which, with the support of France, the Little Entente, and subsequently the Soviet Union, might have resisted the Nazi drive to the east. After 1933 Czechoslovakia — which had hitherto been far more preoccupied by the possibility of Hungarian revision and Habsburg restoration than by the Sudeten problem — had a choice of two alternatives. It could either have tried to come to terms with Germany, as Poland did in 1934, in the hope of diverting the German drive to the Baltic or the Balkans; or have strengthened all available lines of defense against German aggression. Some observers, with the easy assurance of hindsight, criticized President Beneš after Munich for his failure to choose the former of these alternatives. It may be doubted, however, in view of Hitler's ultimate objectives in eastern Europe, whether a policy of conciliation would eventually have proved more advantageous for Czechoslovakia than the Munich settlement. The experience of Poland, threatened, in spite of its non-aggression pact, with German intervention in Danzig, can hardly be regarded as encouraging. The policy of resistance adopted by President Beneš was no more — if no less — open to criticism than the whole post-war concept of collective security, which rested on the assumption, since proved to have been false, that all members of the League had a common interest in defending one of their number against aggression or foreign intervention. If Beneš can be blamed for anything, it is for stubbornly continuing to pin his faith on the system of

collective security after it had shown unmistakable signs of disintegration.

Nor was the Sudeten issue as susceptible of easy solution as some of Beneš's detractors would have us assume since Munich. The problems presented by a multinational state, whose national minorities enjoyed the militant support of neighboring states determined to annex or recover them, cannot be compared, as has been misleadingly done, with those of Switzerland, the United States, or the Soviet Union. The Swiss cantons, whose French, German, and Italian populations have cultural, rather than political, ties with neighboring countries, voluntarily joined forces in establishing a democratic republic whose fundamental principles had their general support; and until the establishment of the League of Nations in 1919, Switzerland was a neutral state, free from political obligations to foreign powers. In the United States individual immigrants, driven from many countries by religious persecution, political oppression, or economic necessity, settled on relatively uninhabited territory where they were free to establish and maintain the form of government the majority of them desired. While many of the immigrants retained cultural and economic ties with their homelands, geographic distance made it difficult to subject them to the political pressure brought to bear on Germans, Hungarians, or Poles in Czechoslovakia. In the Soviet Union, 150 races and nationalities, differing widely in education, religion, and economic development, enjoy a considerable measure of cultural au-

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tonomy, but are welded into a single territorial and political unit by the centralizing force of the Communist party dictatorship. As in the United States, the national groups of the U.S.S.R. are sufficiently removed from outside pressure to avoid the problems which disrupted Czechoslovakia—with the possible exception of the Ukraine, whose Western orientation and resistance to collectivization foreshadow the possibility that Hitler may find there a field for his technique of boring from within, by urging its union with Ruthenia and Polish Ukraine.

Austro-German *Anschluss*, which brought nothing but perfunctory protests from the Western powers, caused a surge of pro-Nazi sentiment among Sudeten Germans. In March 1938 the Sudeten party absorbed the German Agrarian League and the Christian Social party. Henlein, who by that time represented about ninety per cent of the German voters and controlled fifty-five seats in the Chamber of Deputies, called for new elections. On March 29 Ernst Kundt, Sudeten party leader in the Chamber, warned the government to grant full autonomy to the minorities. Spokesmen for other autonomist groups—the United Magyar parties, the Slovak People's party of Father Hlinka, and the deputy of the Polish bloc—supported his demands.

The Prague government declared that "protection" of the Sudeten Germans by Hitler, as foreshadowed in his Reichstag speech of February 20, 1938, would constitute unwarranted interference in Czechoslova-



kia's internal affairs, which it was determined to resist; and offered to accelerate and expand the program of concessions it had promised to the minorities, notably in the agreement of February 1937. On March 28 Premier Hodza announced the government's intention to codify in a single "nationalities statute" all of the legal provisions in force affecting minorities, and intimated that additional powers would be granted to local government bodies.<sup>4</sup> He also agreed to hold during May and June the municipal elections postponed since the autumn of 1937.

Henlein, encouraged by German successes in Austria, increased his demands in a speech delivered at Karlsbad on April 24.<sup>5</sup> He declared that, to achieve friendly relations with the German nation, the Czechs had to revise their "unfortunate conception that it is the duty of the Czech nation to be the Slav bulwark against the so-called German *Drang nach Osten*," and abandon its foreign policy based on pacts with France and the Soviet Union. In a series of eight points, known as the Karlsbad program, he demanded that in order to ensure "a peaceful development in the Czechoslovak state," the Sudeten Germans be granted territorial autonomy in their own district; that new safeguards against denationalization be established; that full restitution be made for injustices to Germans since 1918; and that Sudetens obtain complete freedom to express the German *Weltanschauung*. "In common with

<sup>4</sup> *Prager Presse*, March 29, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> *Völkischer Beobachter*, April 25, 1938.

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Germandom throughout the world," said Henlein, who had previously denied any connection with Hitler, "we profess the fundamental National Socialist view of life."

The Prague government rejected the most drastic of these demands, especially territorial autonomy and restitution for post-war injustices. Henlein, it contended, demanded not merely autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic, but control of the Sudeten territory by a party which had just proclaimed its allegiance to the German Nazis.

### 4. *The May Crisis*

In preparation for the municipal elections to be held on May 22, May 29, and June 12, the Prague government lifted its ban on political meetings and demonstrations. The Sudeten German party immediately announced the creation of a force similar to Hitler's Storm Troops, called the *Freiwilliger Deutscher Schutzdienst*, which was "no parade troop, but a fighting body, constantly in service."<sup>6</sup>

On May 19, on the eve of the first series of municipal elections, Europe was alarmed by rumors of German troop movements in the direction of the Czechoslovak border. The Czech Minister in Berlin was told that although the troop movements were not aimed at Czechoslovakia, Germany would march "to rescue" the Sudeten Germans unless Prague altered its policy

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Taylor: "Partition of Czechoslovakia," op. cit., p. 201.

toward them.<sup>7</sup> These threats, combined with growing violence in the Sudeten territory, indicated that the Sudeten Germans, like the Austrian Nazis, might summon the German army to "restore order" by force.

During the night of May 20 the Prague Cabinet decided to call up one class of reserves and deputy reserves, plus specialist troops from many classes, for "extraordinary maneuvers" — thus avoiding formal mobilization. During the resulting war-scare France reiterated its intention to fulfill its treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia, but urged Prague to make concessions to the Sudeten Germans. The British made strong representations against war both in Prague and in Berlin. The German press complained that the incident had been manufactured out of whole cloth by the Czechs and British in an effort to discredit the Reich. In his Nuremberg speech of September 12, Hitler denied that unusual troop movements had taken place in May. He stated, however, that since "a great power cannot accept a second time such a mean assault," he had ordered on May 29 expansion of the army and air force, and completion of Germany's western fortifications. The May crisis, which demonstrated Czechoslovakia's determination to defend itself if threatened with the fate of Austria, apparently convinced Hitler that Prague could not be brought to accept his terms except by war or serious threat of war.<sup>8</sup>

On May 20, in the midst of the crisis, Dr. Hodza offered to begin immediate negotiations with minority

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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groups regarding the new nationalities statute, but declared he would suppress every attempt at coercion or disorder. As a result of British intervention Henlein, whose party had polled over eighty per cent of the German vote in the municipal elections, consented to prepare a memorandum giving the details of his Karlsbad program. This memorandum, presented on June 7, called for drastic decentralization and a large measure of territorial autonomy for the various national groups. Similar demands were presented by the Slovak People's and United Magyar parties. By the end of June the Prague government had submitted to the minorities a part of its nationalities statute and the draft of a language bill, but had not yet disclosed its plans regarding territorial autonomy. This delay caused the German press, which throughout regarded Czech promises with the utmost skepticism, to unleash a violent attack against Czechoslovakia.

Alarmed by the slow progress of negotiations, the British government, on July 26, announced that Lord Runciman, accompanied by several experts, would go to Czechoslovakia in an unofficial capacity to investigate and, if possible, mediate between the Prague government and the Sudeten Germans. Charged in the House of Commons with sending Runciman to "hustle the Czechs," the Prime Minister declared that his "anxiety has been rather that the Czechoslovak government should be too hasty in dealing with a situation of such delicacy that it was most desirable that the two sides should not get into a position where they were

set and unable to have any further give and take between them.”<sup>9</sup>

The Prague government, apparently fearing the presentation of far-reaching suggestions by Lord Runciman, hastened on July 26 to reveal its own plans for administrative reform, with the qualification that they were not yet completed.<sup>10</sup> The provincial assemblies, transformed into diets, were to be granted considerable powers by the central government, and the representatives of each nationality in each provincial diet were to form a *curia* to deal with certain matters concerning that nationality. This measure, it was hoped, would satisfy the Sudeten demand for national “self-administration.”

The government’s proposals, together with those submitted by the various minority groups, were to form the basis of immediate negotiations.<sup>11</sup> Progress, however, was once more blocked by various obstacles. Some of Dr. Hodza’s supporters were reluctant to make important concessions; Ernst Kundt refused to discuss details with Czech experts until the general program of his party had been accepted; Sudeten extremists indicated their desire for outright cession to the Reich; while the pro-Fascist Czech Agrarians — who were to rule Czechoslovakia after Munich — urged the Prague government to come to terms with Germany. Negotiations finally broke down on August 17,

<sup>9</sup> Speech of Prime Minister Chamberlain in the House of Commons, July 26, 1938. *The Times* (London), July 27, 1938.

<sup>10</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, July 27, 1938.

<sup>11</sup> *Prager Presse*, July 31, 1938.

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just as European tension had been increased by the announcement of German maneuvers and other military preparations.<sup>12</sup>

### 5. *The Runciman Report*

Meanwhile, Lord Runciman, who had spent most of his week-ends visiting the estates of Sudeten German noblemen like Prince von Hohenlohe, had developed "much sympathy" for the Sudeten Germans. The extent to which this "sympathy" was known to Henlein and, through him, to Hitler, and the part it may have played in causing the Führer to demand self-determination at Nuremberg remains as yet a matter of conjecture. In his report to Mr. Chamberlain, submitted on September 16,<sup>13</sup> however, Lord Runciman made the following recommendations, which foreshadow the terms of the Munich accord:

1. Frontier districts between Czechoslovakia and Germany where the Sudeten population is "in an important majority" should be given the full right of self-determination at once, without a plebiscite which would be "a sheer formality." The Runciman report did not specify the actual percentage which would constitute an "important majority."

2. Czechoslovakia "should so remodel her foreign relations as to give assurances to her neighbors that she will under no circumstances attack them." Prague's

<sup>12</sup> Cf. below, p. 143.

<sup>13</sup> Great Britain, *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia*, op. cit., p. 4.

policy "should be entirely neutral, as in the case of Switzerland."

3. The principal powers should give Czechoslovakia guarantees of assistance in case of unprovoked aggression.

4. Delimitation of the area to be transferred to Germany and other technical questions should be entrusted to an international commission.

5. An international force should be organized to keep order in the districts to be transferred pending actual transfer.

Urged by London to settle the Sudeten problem, Lord Runciman once more pressed President Beneš for further concessions. Additional Germans were appointed to administrative posts. A new plan — Plan No. 3 — was prepared by Prague to meet the Sudeten demand for national self-government. Henlein visited Hitler at Berchtesgaden on September 1, bearing a letter in which Lord Runciman urged the Führer to support the Prague negotiations, and returned without an answer, but "convinced of Herr Hitler's desire for a peaceful solution."<sup>14</sup>

The Prague government, subjected to renewed British pressure, submitted its last proposal — Plan No. 4 — to Lord Runciman on September 5, and to the Sudeten party on September 6. This plan embodied the substance of the Sudeten demand for self-government

<sup>14</sup> Speech of Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, September 28, 1938. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons (London: H.M. Stationery Office; 1938), Vol. 339, No 160, p. 6.

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by providing for the establishment of cantons, whose boundaries were to follow nationality lines, and which were to have legislatures elected by proportional representation. All functions not considered essential for the unity and security of the state were to be transferred from the central government to the cantons, and police functions were to be divided between state gendarmerie and local police. National sections were to be created in important administrative departments of the central government to deal with questions affecting separate nationalities. Each nationality was to have a claim to all kinds of state employment in proportion to its percentage of the total population.<sup>15</sup> The principle of proportionality was to be observed in the education, social welfare, and public health departments, and in the grant of state contracts with respect to the number both of concerns and of employees, according to the amount expended by the state. A government loan of a billion Czech crowns was to be granted for the assistance of distressed areas, seventy per cent of which was to be assigned to the Sudeten districts. A new language law was to establish complete equality of the Czechoslovak, German, Hungarian, Polish, and Ruthenian languages in official matters. Immediate steps were to be taken to carry the whole plan into effect; meanwhile, party propaganda was to be moderated.<sup>16</sup>

Referring to Plan No. 4, Lord Runciman, in his

<sup>15</sup> In the case of the Germans, this proportion was to be attained in ten years.

<sup>16</sup> *New York Times*, September 8, 1938; Taylor: "Partition of Czechoslovakia," *op. cit.*, p. 204.



report to Mr. Chamberlain, said: "In my opinion — and I believe, in the opinion of the more responsible Sudeten leaders — this plan embodied all the requirements of the Karlsbad eight points and with a little clarification and extension could have been made to cover them in their entirety."<sup>17</sup> These concessions — offered with no corresponding pledge from the Third Reich regarding acceptance of the plan or termination of its military preparations — were unacceptable to the more extreme members of the Sudeten German party, who provoked various incidents before and immediately after Hitler's Nuremberg speech of September 12. Responsibility for the final break, said Lord Runciman, "must, in my opinion, rest upon Henlein, Frank and upon those of their supporters inside and outside the country who were urging them to extreme unconstitutional action."<sup>18</sup>

### 6. *The Czech Lesson*

If any lesson can be drawn from a study of Czechoslovakia's internal crisis, it is that the originally moderate demands of a German minority were fanned into open rebellion by threats and propaganda from Germany; that Hitler's Nuremberg demand for "self-determination," which went beyond demands previously made by Henlein, disregarded the wishes both of moderate Henleinists and of non-Nazi Sudeten Ger-

<sup>17</sup> Great Britain, *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia*, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

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mans; and that Hitler presented first to Prague, then to France and Britain, demands he did not expect them to accept, each time raising the ante, and playing on democratic sympathies by his emphasis on "self-determination." Under these circumstances, all concessions made by Prague, no matter how far-reaching, were destined to be stillborn, because they had no relevance to Hitler's ultimate objectives with regard to Czechoslovakia. His Nuremberg demand for "self-determination," as President Beneš suspected and as events were soon to prove, was merely the entering wedge for German subjugation of Czechoslovakia, which had been a foregone conclusion since the annexation of Austria in March 1938.

# SEPTEMBER 1938

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V.  
DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND  
OF THE  
MUNICH ACCORD



*1. The Aftermath of Anschluss*

THE CZECHOSLOVAK problem, which had preoccupied European chancelleries since Hitler's rise to power, was given immediate urgency by the Austro-German union proclaimed on March 13. The second Cabinet of M. Blum, formed during the week-end when German troops were occupying Austria, reaffirmed France's determination to fulfill the obligations of its treaties with Czechoslovakia. Mr. Chamberlain, how-

ever, speaking in the House of Commons on March 24, declined to pledge Britain to assist Czechoslovakia in case of attack, or to support France if it carried out the terms of its Czechoslovak alliance. Such a pledge, he said, could not be given "in relation to an area" where Britain's vital interests "are not concerned in the same degree as they are in the case of France and Belgium." At the same time, he indicated that Britain might intervene as a League member "for the restoration of peace or the maintenance of international order," and stressed that "where peace and war are concerned, legal obligations are not alone involved." On the contrary, he declared:

"The inexorable pressure of facts might well prove more powerful than formal pronouncements, and in that event it might be well within the bounds of probability that other countries, besides those which were parties to the original dispute, would almost immediately become involved. This is especially true in the case of two countries like Great Britain and France, with long associations of friendship, with interests closely interwoven, devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty, and determined to uphold them."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile in France a section of the press was beginning to raise doubts regarding the validity of France's obligations toward Czechoslovakia. This point of view was explicitly developed in *Le Temps* by Joseph-Barthélemy, who asked whether, to preserve

<sup>1</sup> Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons (London: H.M. Stationery Office; 1938), Fifth Series, Vol. 333, p. 1046.

## DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF MUNICH

Czechoslovakia, that "political aggregation of several nationalities," it was necessary to kill three million Frenchmen, and answered "with pain, but with firmness: no!" In his opinion, France's treaties with Czechoslovakia, concluded within the framework of the League Covenant and the Locarno treaties, lost their validity when the League became impotent and Germany denounced Locarno.<sup>2</sup>

This view was apparently shared by M. Bonnet, French Foreign Minister,<sup>3</sup> who with Premier Daladier participated in a conference with the British ministers in London on April 28 and 29. At this conference, however, M. Daladier succeeded in impressing the British ministers — including Mr. Chamberlain — with the seriousness of the central-European situation. The communiqué issued at the close of the conference revealed that Britain and France had perfected the defensive Western alliance they had been developing since March 1938 when, following Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland, the two countries agreed to hold consultations between their general staffs. This alliance established far closer collaboration, in the matter of both armed forces and military supplies, than had existed before 1914. The British, however, were not ready to go beyond Mr. Chamberlain's statement of March 24, and once more recommended concessions

<sup>2</sup> Joseph-Barthélemy: "*Tribune Libre: Conscience Angoissée*," *Le Temps*, April 12, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph-Barthélemy's arguments were used by M. Bonnet in his speech at the Radical Socialist Congress in Marseilles on October 29, 1938. *Ibid.*, October 30, 1938.

## EUROPE IN RETREAT

by Prague to the Sudeten Germans. The compromise finally reached was that Britain and France would separately use their influence in Berlin, Warsaw, and Prague to urge satisfactory solution of Czechoslovakia's minority problems, which, according to the British, had to precede further political and economic commitments. If the Nazis continued to be truculent, Britain and France agreed jointly to warn Germany that war with Czechoslovakia might lead to a general conflict.<sup>4</sup>

Sometime in early May Mr. Chamberlain discussed the Czechoslovak situation at a private luncheon given by Lady Astor for a group of American correspondents. The Prime Minister then apparently believed that Czechoslovakia could not survive in its existing form. He was consequently convinced that, to avoid resort to force, the Prague government should promptly make concessions to Germany. He already thought at this time that frontier revision might be preferable to cantonal autonomy. The revision he envisaged was cession of a "fringe" of territory to Germany, which, according to him, would transform Czechoslovakia into a smaller, but sounder, state.<sup>5</sup>

On May 12 Konrad Henlein, leader of the Sudeten German party, paid a surprise visit to London, where he interviewed not only government officials but opponents of concessions to Germany, notably Winston Churchill and Sir Robert Vansittart. This visit coin-

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, and *New York Times*, April 30, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Driscoll, in *New York Herald Tribune*, May 15, 1938. Cf. also Augur, in *New York Times*, May 14, 1938.

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cided with action in Berlin by the British Ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, who expressed the hope that the Sudeten question would be settled without resort to force. Backed by France — which in return for the Anglo-French defensive alliance was expected to use its influence for appeasement in eastern Europe — Britain urged Prague to make all concessions “compatible with the security of the state,” but declined to give guarantees of military aid.

On July 18, on the eve of the British sovereigns' visit to Paris, Hitler's personal emissary, Captain Wiedemann, called on Lord Halifax, British Foreign Secretary. Captain Wiedemann expressed the regret of the German government that negotiations for settlement of the Sudeten issue were making such slow progress, and its hope for improvement in Anglo-German relations.<sup>6</sup> Out of this interview apparently developed the British idea of sending a neutral mission to Czechoslovakia for the purpose of bridging the wide gap between the Prague government's nationalities statute and the demands of the Sudeten Germans. When Lord Halifax discussed this project with MM. Daladier and Bonnet in Paris on July 20, suggesting a joint Anglo-French mission, the French ministers declined to participate, but offered no opposition to the appointment of a British mediator. On July 26 Mr. Chamberlain announced in the House of Commons that Lord Runciman, a Conservative, would be sent to Czechoslovakia as “ad-

<sup>6</sup> “From Our Diplomatic Correspondent,” *The Times*, July 20, 1938.



viser" to investigate the situation and, if possible, mediate between the two parties.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. *Waiting for the Crisis*

While Lord Runciman was wrestling with the Sudeten problem, the German government, early in August, announced extensive army maneuvers, to begin on August 15 and continue until after the Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg, and various measures empowering the military authorities to requisition civilian goods and services. These developments, according to Mr. Chamberlain, "could not fail to be regarded abroad as equivalent to partial mobilization and . . . suggested the German government was determined to find a settlement of the Sudeten question by autumn."<sup>8</sup>

Sir Neville Henderson, British Ambassador in Berlin, was instructed by the middle of August to point out to the German government that these military measures "could not fail to destroy all chance of successful mediation by Lord Runciman's mission, perhaps endanger the peace of all great powers in Europe," and end the prospects for resumption of Anglo-German conversations.<sup>9</sup> In his reply, Herr von Ribbentrop refused to discuss military measures, and "referred to the expressed opinion that the British efforts in Prague had only served to increase Czech intransigence."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., July 26 and 27, 1938.

<sup>8</sup> Speech of Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, September 28, 1938, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

## DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF MUNICH

Britain's answer was delivered by Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, at Lanark, Scotland, on August 27.<sup>11</sup> Avoiding any direct reference to Germany and leaving the way open for negotiations with the totalitarian states, Sir John reaffirmed Mr. Chamberlain's statement of March 24 that Britain would probably become involved in a central-European war. A statement issued on the same day by the British Foreign Office praised the "conciliatory attitude" of the Prague government, which had just offered its Third Plan for cantonal autonomy; expressed the hope that there would be a "constructive response"; and deplored the Henlein "self-defense" proclamation.<sup>12</sup> These declarations coincided with the announcement on August 26 that a great part of the British home fleet would leave English Channel ports on September 6, the opening day of the Nuremberg Congress, for maneuvers north of Scotland which were to continue until November. On August 31 the German government notified Britain that it, too, proposed to hold naval maneuvers in the North Sea in September.

Meanwhile Sir Nevile Henderson had been recalled to London on August 30 for consultation with the Cabinet. He returned the next day to Berlin and gave Herr von Kreitzer, State Secretary of the German Foreign Office, "a strong personal warning" regarding the probable attitude of the British government in the event of German aggression against Czechoslo-

<sup>11</sup> *The Times*, August 28, 1938.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

vakia, "particularly if France were compelled to intervene." On September 1 Sir Nevile, during an interview with Ribbentrop, repeated "as a personal but most urgent message" the warning he had delivered the previous day.<sup>13</sup>

Reports from Berlin indicated that the Führer found it difficult to believe that the British "would go to war to prevent the Sudeten Germans from exercising the right of self-determination."<sup>14</sup> This opinion reflected the advice of Ribbentrop, who, as Ambassador to London, had frequented British circles favorable to reconciliation with Nazi Germany. The French Foreign Office, following its routine practice in such incidents, stressed the necessity of making it clear to Hitler what Britain would do in case of German attack on Czechoslovakia. Mr. Chamberlain, however, did not want to take the risk "of further aggravating the situation by any formal representations which might have been interpreted by the German government as a public rebuff, as had been the case during the May 21 crisis."<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, Sir Nevile Henderson, who attended the Nuremberg Congress, "took every opportunity to impress upon the leading German personalities" — among them Ribbentrop, Göring, Hess, and Himmler — the attitude of the British government as expressed on March 24 and August 27; and it was decided by the British Cabinet "to make personal repre-

<sup>13</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

<sup>14</sup> Dispatch from Berlin, *The Times*, September 1, 1938.

<sup>15</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

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sentations to the Chancellor himself,"<sup>16</sup> although Sir Neville did not obtain an interview with Hitler.

While Sir Neville Henderson was warning Germany, Mr. Basil Newton, British Minister to Prague, told President Beneš that it was vital in the interests of Czechoslovakia "to offer immediately and without reservation those concessions without which the Sudeten question could not be considered settled." The British government was "not in a position to say whether anything less than the full program [Henlein's Karlsbad program] would suffice"; Lord Runciman, however, had already informed Mr. Chamberlain that the Fourth Plan, submitted to him on September 5, "embodied almost all the requirements of the eight Karlsbad points, and with a little clarification and extension could have been made to cover them in their entirety."<sup>17</sup>

The Moravska-Ostrava incident of September 4 — which, according to Lord Runciman's report, "was very much exaggerated"<sup>18</sup> — and the subsequent suspension of negotiations between Prague and the Sudeten Germans, created a dangerous deadlock on the eve of the Nuremberg Congress. The Nazis expressed "a very deep-rooted scepticism" regarding the possibility that pressure by any power other than the Reich would succeed in bringing Czechoslovakia to the

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Lord Runciman to the Prime Minister, September 21, 1938. Great Britain, *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia*, September 1938, op. cit.

point of making the concessions they considered necessary.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the German people felt "noticeably less enthusiasm for the Sudeten German cause than anxiety as to the consequences of championing it."<sup>20</sup> The violent anti-Czech barrage in the German press apparently had little effect on public opinion, which displayed none of the war hysteria noted in Berlin on the eve of the World War.

The French government had taken the precaution on September 5 of recalling a number of reservists, particularly technicians, to bring the Maginot Line forts up to their full strength. On September 4 M. Bonnet, speaking in Pointe de Grave at the unveiling of a monument commemorating the entrance of the United States into the World War, had declared that France, "at all events," would remain faithful to all its pacts and treaties.<sup>21</sup> This speech was well received by the French press, and the people displayed a measure of *sang-froid* in the face of the impending crisis for which they were praised by M. Daladier on September 5.

At this decisive moment Nazi extremists received unexpected (or possibly expected) support from the *London Times*, which in its leading article of September 7 advanced the idea that the Sudeten Germans "do not find themselves at ease within the Czechoslovak Republic."<sup>22</sup> In that case, said *The Times*, "it

<sup>19</sup> Dispatch from Berlin, *The Times*, September 3, 1938.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, August 31, 1938.

<sup>21</sup> *Le Temps*, September 5, 1938.

<sup>22</sup> "Nuremberg and Aussig," *The Times*, September 7, 1938

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might be worth while for the Czechoslovak government to consider whether they should exclude altogether the project, which has found favour in some quarters [presumably British], of making Czechoslovakia a more homogeneous state by the secession of that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nation with which they are united by race. In any case the wishes of the population concerned would seem to be a decisively important element in any solution that can hope to be regarded as permanent, and the advantages to Czechoslovakia of becoming a homogeneous state might conceivably outweigh the obvious disadvantages of losing the Sudeten German districts of the borderland." *The Times* article, promptly disavowed by the British Foreign Office, not unnaturally "aroused the greatest interest" in Germany.<sup>23</sup> It was regarded as significant that *The Times* "should at this moment have touched upon a possible solution" which, if not expressed in Germany, "has been at the back of German minds." Italy, while outwardly supporting Germany's claims to the Sudetenland, showed a more moderate attitude than the London *Times*. The semi-official *Informazione Diplomatica* on September 8 supported Henlein's Karlsbad program on the ground that it called for territorial autonomy, but not for "separation pure and simple" from Czechoslovakia.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile a non-resistance campaign had been launched by several Paris newspapers, notably *La*

<sup>23</sup> Dispatch from Berlin, *ibid.*, September 9, 1938.

<sup>24</sup> Dispatch from Rome, *ibid.*, September 9, 1938.

*République*,<sup>25</sup> *Le Matin*, and *Le Jour*, all of which declared that the Sudeten issue was a domestic question which should not be allowed to provoke an international conflict.

While the French Foreign Office still feared Britain had not made its position sufficiently clear, the British Cabinet believed that its view had "now been conveyed fully to the proper quarter."<sup>26</sup> This impression was strengthened by reports that Field Marshal Göring, in spite of a violent speech on September 10, had urged Hitler to adopt a moderate course — advice which was apparently ill-received, and resulted in Göring's absence from Nuremberg on September 12, ostensibly for reasons of health. German army leaders, too, opposed the use of force — notably General Ludwig Beck, Chief of Staff, who resigned on October 31.<sup>27</sup>

On September 9 the British Cabinet decided to take precautionary naval measures, including the commissioning of mine-layers and mine-sweepers; and on September 11, the day before Hitler's Nuremberg speech, Mr. Chamberlain, in a statement to the press, emphasized the close ties uniting Britain and France "in the probability in certain eventualities of this country going to the assistance of France."<sup>28</sup> The French Foreign Office, in an ambiguous statement to certain Paris

<sup>25</sup> M. Émile Roche, editor of *La République*, is a close friend of M. Bonnet.

<sup>26</sup> "From Our Diplomatic Correspondent," *The Times*, September 12, 1938.

<sup>27</sup> *L'Europe Nouvelle*, October 8, 1938.

<sup>28</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

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journalists, minimized the importance of Mr. Chamberlain's statement and once more expressed the hope that other steps might be taken to clarify Britain's attitude on Czechoslovakia.<sup>29</sup> In the British Cabinet, however, "the argument was used that what had been intended to deter might instead contrive to provoke," and at the Cabinet meeting of September 12 it was decided that "no further action could usefully be taken" before Hitler's speech that evening.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile the German Ambassador in Paris had been warned by M. Bonnet on September 7 that France would fulfill its treaty obligations should Czechoslovakia be attacked, and a similar warning had been given to the German military attaché by General Gamelin, Chief of the French General Staff.<sup>31</sup>

In a further effort to strengthen lines of defense against possible German aggression, M. Bonnet made a brief visit to Geneva on September 11, where the League Assembly was in session, and consulted M. Litvinov, Soviet Foreign Commissar, and M. Petrescu-Comnen, Rumanian Foreign Minister, to determine the assistance the Soviet Union was prepared to give Prague, and the measure of collaboration Soviet armed forces might receive from Rumania, whose territory they would have to cross to reach Czechoslovakia. M. Litvinov reiterated his previous pledge that the Soviet government would assist Czechoslovakia pro-

<sup>29</sup> "*Autour d'une capitulation*," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, October 8, 1938, p. 1087.

<sup>30</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

<sup>31</sup> Dispatch from Berlin, *The Times*, September 9, 1938.



vided France acted at the same time, while M. Petrescu-Comnen indicated that Rumania had already permitted the passage of Soviet airplanes over Rumanian territory.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of British and French warnings and precautionary measures, the impression still persisted in Berlin that if the Reich went to the assistance of the Sudeten Germans, this would constitute no more than "intervention" and would not be an invasion setting into motion the mechanism of Franco-Soviet aid to Czechoslovakia and British aid to France.<sup>33</sup>

Hitler's anxiously awaited speech of September 12 did little to ease European tension.<sup>34</sup> Contrary to the expectations of extreme pessimists, the Führer refrained from irrevocably committing Germany to war on behalf of the Sudeten Germans. But neither did he hold out any hope of appeasement so long as the Sudetens remained within the boundaries of Czechoslovakia.

When it came to specifying the consequences of the Sudeten crisis, which his Nazi audience, pitched to a point of frenzy, must have expected to be nothing short of war, Hitler adopted a less violent tone. He discussed the war preparations undertaken at his orders on May 28 — a week after the Czech mobilization of May 21 — and boasted that German fortifications in

<sup>32</sup> *The Times*, September 12 and 13, 1938; *L'Europe Nouvelle*, October 8, 1938, p. 1091.

<sup>33</sup> "From Our Diplomatic Correspondent," *ibid.*, September 12, 1938.

<sup>34</sup> For English text, cf. *The Times* and *New York Times*, September 13, 1938.

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the Rhineland were being rapidly completed by 270,000 workers under the command of Dr. Todt, builder of Germany's famous military roads. These fortifications, he said, would be finished "before the beginning of winter," thus setting an ominous deadline for the efforts of the Western powers to settle the Sudeten problem, but also confirming the impression abroad that, despite its blustering, Germany did not yet feel ready for a major conflict.

This statement, taken in conjunction with Hitler's speech of September 6 when he told his followers that Germany need fear no blockade, and Göring's assurances of September 10 regarding the country's military and economic preparedness, served two purposes: to heighten Britain's apprehension and its desire to avert war by urging further Czechoslovak concessions; and to reassure the German people, who did not conceal their fear of war and were increasingly worried by food restrictions and military requisitions. The only concrete point in Hitler's speech was his emphasis on the right of Sudeten Germans to self-determination, which indicated that he might demand a plebiscite.

The Czechoslovak Minister in London, Jan Masaryk, had already warned the British government on September 12 that a plebiscite would be unacceptable to Prague because it would endanger the security of the republic.<sup>35</sup> On September 13, following a series of riots in the Sudetenland timed to coincide with

<sup>35</sup> *The Times*, September 13, 1938.

the Nuremberg speech, the Prague government proclaimed martial law in several Sudeten German districts. The Henlein party immediately presented an ultimatum demanding repeal of martial law, which the Czechoslovak Cabinet refused to consider, on the ground that a political party could not dictate to the government. Negotiations between Prague and the Sudeten Germans were broken off; Lord Runciman, considering his mission at an end, returned to London; and by September 14 German troops were concentrated on the Czechoslovak frontier, ostensibly to prevent further incidents in the Sudetenland, "although reliable reports indicated order had been completely restored."<sup>36</sup> Britain feared that a German invasion might bring into operation France's pledge to assist Czechoslovakia, and thus precipitate a European war, in which it might "well have been involved in support of France." During the night of September 13-14 M. Daladier telephoned Mr. Chamberlain and stressed the value of substituting direct encounters between responsible statesmen for diplomatic notes and démarches.<sup>37</sup> Mr. Chamberlain, who shared this view, decided to put into effect a plan he had had in mind "for a considerable period as a last resort." Believing that one of the principal difficulties in dealing with totalitarian governments was lack of any means of es-

<sup>36</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

<sup>37</sup> Speech of M. Daladier in the Chamber of Deputies, October 4, 1938, France, *Débats parlementaires*, Chambre des Députés, 16e Législature, Session Extraordinaire de 1938, 1re Séance, *Journal Officiel*, October 5, 1938, p. 1526.

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tablishing contacts with the responsible leaders, he decided to have a personal interview with Hitler and find out "whether there was any hope yet of saving peace."<sup>38</sup> Hitler responded to this suggestion "with cordiality," and on September 15 Mr. Chamberlain went by airplane to Munich and from there by train to Hitler's mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden.

Announcement of Mr. Chamberlain's visit was greeted with intense relief in Britain, as well as in Germany. But on the eve of Mr. Chamberlain's arrival at Berchtesgaden, Henlein, who had hitherto discussed only cantonal autonomy and the possibility of a plebiscite, issued a proclamation declaring the German and Czech populations could no longer live side by side in the same state and that the Sudeten Germans now wanted to "go home to the Reich." The Italian press, too, adopted a firmer tone, and on September 13 *Informazione Diplomatica* stated that there were only two alternatives — to give the Sudeten Germans the means to determine their own future, or to deny them that right, precipitating confusion and war.<sup>39</sup>

In France, meanwhile, the ground was being rapidly cleared for acceptance of Hitler's Berchtesgaden demands. The French Cabinet, meeting in the afternoon of September 12, before the Nuremberg speech, still displayed an outwardly firm attitude.<sup>40</sup> In a long conference following this Cabinet session, M. Daladier, Minister of National Defense as well as Prime Minister,

<sup>38</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

<sup>39</sup> *Corriere della Sera*, September 14, 1938.

<sup>40</sup> *Le Temps* and *The Times*, September 13, 1938.

discussed emergency military measures with General Gamelin, Inspector General of the army.<sup>41</sup> During this conference General Gamelin expressed his confidence in the efficiency of the French army, and his belief that, since Germany would be unable to win a decisive victory by a short war, France, better equipped than the Reich for prolonged conflict, would emerge as the final victor. This opinion was contradicted by General Vuillemin, a non-career man, Chief of Staff of the French air force, who had been profoundly impressed with the performance of German airplanes displayed to him by Field Marshal Göring in July.<sup>42</sup> The Paris correspondent of the London *Times* reported on September 13 that, while no trace of the unthinking enthusiasm of 1914 was apparent in Paris, "the entire nation is clearly in no mind to fall into the opposite extreme of nerveless gloom."

This mood was completely altered by Hitler's Nuremberg speech.<sup>43</sup> At its meeting on September 13 the Cabinet split into two groups—a majority, led by MM. Bonnet, Chautemps, and de Monzie, who advocated concessions, and a minority, composed of MM. Daladier, Reynaud, Mandel, and Champetier de Ribes, supported by the presidents of the Senate and the Chamber, MM. Herriot and Jeanneney, who urged

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> XXX, "L'Avis que les Chefs Militaires ont donné au Gouvernement Français," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, September 24, 1938.

<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, September 15, 1938; Alexander Werth: "Cold Feet in Paris," *The New Statesman and Nation*, September 24, 1938, p. 445.

## DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF MUNICH

undiminished resistance to Hitler's demands.<sup>44</sup> In a statement of September 14, M. Bonnet declared that the government wanted to leave every door to conciliation open, provided Prague gave its consent.<sup>45</sup> This view was echoed by all sections of the press, with the exception of nationalists like M. de Kerillis on the extreme Right, and Communists, notably Gabriel Péri, foreign editor of *L'Humanité*, on the extreme Left.

### 3. *The Berchtesgaden Interview*

It was with full knowledge of France's internal situation that Mr. Chamberlain met Hitler at Berchtesgaden on September 15. During the first conversation, which lasted three hours, the British Prime Minister "very soon became aware that the situation was much more acute and much more urgent than [he] had realized."<sup>46</sup> Hitler, "in courteous but perfectly definite terms, stated he had made up his mind the Sudeten Germans must have the right of self-determination and of returning, if they wished, to the Reich. If they could not achieve this by their own efforts, he said, he would assist them to do so, and he declared categorically that, rather than wait, he would be prepared to risk a world war."

<sup>44</sup> *The Times* and *Le Temps*, September 15, 1938.

<sup>45</sup> *The Times*, September 15, 1938.

<sup>46</sup> The account of the Chamberlain-Hitler negotiations, unless otherwise noted, is based on Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

So strongly did Chamberlain get the impression that Hitler was contemplating an immediate invasion of Czechoslovakia that, as he told the House of Commons on September 28, "I asked him why he had allowed me to travel all that way, since I evidently was wasting my time." Hitler answered that "if I could give him there and then the assurance the British Government accepted the principle of self-determination, he was quite ready to discuss ways and means of carrying it out. If, on the contrary, I told him such a principle could not be considered by the British Government, then he agreed that it was no use to continue our conversation." Hitler complained of British threats against Germany, to which Mr. Chamberlain replied that the Führer "might have just cause for complaint if I allowed him to think that in no circumstances would this country go to war with Germany when, in fact, there were conditions in which such a contingency might arise."

Faced with what he regarded as a threat of war, Mr. Chamberlain undertook to return at once to London to consult his Cabinet, on condition that Hitler refrained from active hostilities until he had had time to obtain their reply. This assurance Hitler gave, provided "nothing happened in Czechoslovakia of such a nature as to force his hand."

Mr. Chamberlain returned to London on September 16 convinced that his "visit alone prevented an invasion, for which everything had been prepared," and that, with German troops in the positions they then oc-

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cupied, "nothing anybody could do would prevent an invasion unless the right of self-determination was granted, and that quickly, to the Sudeten Germans." And that, said Mr. Chamberlain, "was the sole hope of a peaceful solution."

### 4. *The Anglo-French Proposals*

Immediately following Mr. Chamberlain's return, a Cabinet meeting was held on Friday evening, September 16, with the participation of Lord Runciman, who had come back from Prague at the Prime Minister's request. Lord Runciman presented the suggestions embodied in his report to Mr. Chamberlain regarding cession of Sudeten districts where the German population was "in an important majority," the grant of local autonomy in other areas containing German inhabitants, and the adoption by Czechoslovakia of a neutral foreign policy.<sup>47</sup> Mr. Chamberlain subsequently implied that the Cabinet's decision regarding cession of Sudeten territory had been directly affected by Lord Runciman's report. It would seem, however, that the Prime Minister had already reached a similar conclusion as early as May; and it may well be asked whether it was within the province of a supposedly neutral "mediator" between the Czechoslovak government and the Sudeten minority to prescribe the foreign policy to be adopted by an independent state.

Following this Cabinet meeting, it was decided to

<sup>47</sup> Cf. above, p. 117.



invite MM. Daladier and Bonnet to London for consultation regarding Hitler's Berchtesgaden proposals. The Czechoslovak Prime Minister, Dr. Hodza, declared on September 18 that "the so-called plebiscite" could in no circumstances assure "peaceful and constructive collaboration" in Europe.<sup>48</sup> This statement hardened the attitude of Berlin, which already believed that Prague would never accept a plebiscite and staked all on war, hoping to hold out long enough to involve France, Britain, and Russia in a general conflict.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile Premier Mussolini, speaking at Trieste on September 18, demanded a "radical, totalitarian" solution of the Czechoslovak problem by "plebiscites for all the nationalities which want them," adding that, if a front were formed either for or against Prague, "Italy knows on which side she will be."<sup>50</sup> The Italian press, however, continued to hope that the conflict would be either settled or localized and did not anticipate a general war.

At the all-day conference held by French and British ministers in London on Sunday, September 18, M. Bonnet, in answer to British questions regarding France's military preparedness, apparently stressed a section of General Gamelin's report pointing out the weakness of French aviation, while leaving out another section emphasizing the quality of the French army. The Anglo-French proposals adopted as a result of this conference embodied the principal recom-

<sup>48</sup> *The Times*, September 19, 1938.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Corriere della Sera*, September 19, 1938.

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mendations submitted by Lord Runciman to the British Cabinet on September 16.<sup>51</sup> The French and British governments were convinced that, "after recent events, the point has now been reached where the further maintenance within the boundaries of the Czechoslovak state of the districts mainly inhabited by Sudeten Germans cannot, in fact, continue any longer without imperiling the interests of Czechoslovakia herself and of European peace." Both governments were consequently "compelled to the conclusion that the maintenance of peace and the safety of Czechoslovakia's vital interests cannot effectively be assured unless these areas are now transferred to the Reich . . . either by direct transfer or as the result of a plebiscite." In view of the difficulties which might be created by a plebiscite, they anticipated, "in the absence of indication to the contrary," that Czechoslovakia might prefer to settle the Sudeten problem by the method of direct transfer, "and as a case by itself" — apparently drawing a distinction between the claims of Germany and those of Poland or Hungary.

In the absence of an official text of the Anglo-French proposals, which were not published as a British White Paper until September 28, the phrase "mainly inhabited by Sudeten Germans" was interpreted by the press in Britain and other countries as covering areas inhabited by a population from 70 to 75 per cent German; and an effort was subsequently made to prove

<sup>51</sup> "The Anglo-French Proposals presented to the Czechoslovak Government on September 19, 1938," *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia, September 1938*, op. cit., p. 8.

that, at Munich, France and Britain were forced by Hitler to accept territorial terms in excess of those formulated at London. This contention is supported by the text of the Anglo-French proposals, which were distinctly more favorable to Czechoslovakia than the Godesberg memorandum or the Munich accord. These proposals provided for the transfer to Germany of "areas with over 50 per cent of German inhabitants" — presumably on the basis of the Czech 1930 census, not on the basis of the Austro-Hungarian census of 1910, which was applied after Munich. "Where circumstances render it necessary," frontiers were to be adjusted by some international body, including a Czech representative; this body might also be charged with questions of possible exchange of population. A territorial counter-offer from Prague was barred in advance by the French and British governments, which declared they were "satisfied that the transfer of smaller areas based on a higher percentage would not meet the case."

The two governments recognized that, if Prague concurred in these proposals, it was entitled to ask for some assurance of its future security. The British government — yielding on this point to M. Daladier — was consequently "prepared" to join in an international guarantee of the new boundaries of Czechoslovakia against unprovoked aggression, on one important condition: that this general guarantee should be substituted for "existing treaties which involve reciprocal obligations of a military character" — thus making it

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imperative for Prague to abandon its treaties with France and the Soviet Union. Mr. Chamberlain, however, regarded this "completely new commitment" as a substantial concession, because Britain was "not previously bound by any obligations toward Czechoslovakia other than those involved by the Covenant of the League."<sup>52</sup>

The Anglo-French proposals carried a curt time-limit. The Prague government was asked to give its reply at the earliest possible moment, as Mr. Chamberlain "must resume conversations with Herr Hitler not later than Wednesday [September 21], and earlier if possible."

While the French and British ministers were in conference on September 18, M. Masaryk had notified them that his government took it for granted it would be consulted before any decisions were reached, and could not accept any responsibility for proposals drafted without its participation.<sup>53</sup> The Anglo-French proposals, presented without prior consultation with Prague, plunged the Czechs into grim despair. M. Osusky, Czechoslovak Minister to Paris, on learning their nature from M. Bonnet, said: "My country has been tried and condemned by a court which did not even summon us to appear. . . . Yet one of the judges is a pledged ally and we had hoped that the other was a powerful friend."<sup>54</sup> The Czechs felt they were confronted with two equally dangerous alternatives — a

<sup>52</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

<sup>53</sup> *The Times*, September 19, 1938.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, September 20, 1938.

war in which they would not be sure of support by their allies, or dismemberment of their territory. Their fears were strengthened by the opinion, now openly expressed in Berlin, that German interests demanded not only cession of Sudetenland, but reduction of Czechoslovakia to military insignificance.<sup>55</sup>

The French Cabinet met on September 19 in an atmosphere of bitterness and deep depression to hear the report of MM. Daladier and Bonnet on their London conversations. The Premier stressed the point that, while Britain did not dispute France's right to honor its treaty obligations toward Czechoslovakia, Mr. Chamberlain had made it "abundantly clear" that his government would not commit itself to give France military support unless French integrity was directly threatened. Under these circumstances, M. Daladier declared, it was the duty of the French government at least to support the presentation of the London proposals to Prague, although it was not ready to exercise more than "friendly pressure" on Dr. Beneš. The Cabinet meeting revealed that, while a number of ministers—notably MM. Reynaud, Mandel, and Champetier de Ribes—considered the proposals as outrageous, "none of them was prepared to accept the responsibility for rejecting them outright."<sup>56</sup> French public opinion, as reflected by the press, accepted the Anglo-French proposals as "a deplorable and even a shameful necessity." This point of view was best expressed by M. Blum, who wrote in *Le Populaire* on

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

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September 20 that he was "divided between cowardly relief and shame." Meanwhile, announcement of the Anglo-French plan for settlement of the Sudeten issue had encouraged Czechoslovakia's other neighbors — Poland and Hungary — to demand their share of the spoils.

The Prague government, without either accepting or rejecting the Anglo-French proposals, indicated in a note of September 20 that it might invoke the German-Czech treaty of arbitration of 1926 and submit the issue to the World Court at The Hague. By that time twenty-two German divisions were massed on the Czech frontier, the German press had adopted an increasingly violent tone toward Czechoslovakia, and the formation by Henlein of a Sudeten *Freikorps* on the German side of the frontier increased the perils of the situation. Early on Wednesday, September 21 — the day originally set for Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Godesberg — the British and French governments addressed an urgent appeal to Prague for a more definite reply to their proposals, so that when the Prime Minister returned to Germany he would go "with a completely clear idea of where the Czechoslovak government stand."<sup>57</sup> Although M. Daladier, at the Cabinet meeting of September 19, had definitely assured his colleagues that France intended to use no more than "friendly pressure" on Prague, M. Bonnet, in the night of September 21, instructed the French Minister

<sup>57</sup> "From Our Diplomatic Correspondent," *The Times*, September 21, 1938.

in Prague to inform the Czechoslovak government that if it rejected the Anglo-French proposals, France would be unable to aid Czechoslovakia against German attack.<sup>58</sup> This démarche was apparently made without the consent of other members of the Cabinet. In protest, MM. Reynaud, Mandel, and Champetier de Ribes — who believed that the Soviet Union was ready to fulfill its obligations toward Czechoslovakia — presented their resignations to M. Daladier on September 22, but, in view of Mr. Chamberlain's impending visit to Godesberg, decided to remain in office for the time being.

Meanwhile, on September 19, the Czechoslovak government had formally asked the Soviet Union whether it was prepared to give immediate and effective assistance if France did likewise. In a speech to the League Assembly at Geneva on September 21 M. Litvinov said that his government "had given a clear answer in the

<sup>58</sup> Dispatch from Paris, *ibid.*, September 22, 1938. Fabre-Luce, citing a speech made by Émile Roche, editor of *La République*, suggests that President Beneš welcomed French and British pressure because it provided him with an alibi for making concessions to Germany opposed by his own government. Alfred Fabre-Luce: *Histoire secrète de la conciliation de Munich* (Paris: Grasset; 1938), p. 57. Professor Henri Hauser of the Sorbonne categorically denies Beneš was playing a "comedy," stating that the intervention of the French Minister in Prague should be described not as "pressure," but as an "ultimatum." Letter to *L'Europe Nouvelle*, November 12, 1938. For detailed versions of this démarche, cf. memorandum of Professor Seton-Watson, read in the British House of Commons by Dr. Hugh Dalton, Laborite, on October 3, 1938. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 339, No. 161, p. 142; and Hubert Beuve-Méry: "*La Vérité sur la pression franco-britannique exercée à Prague le 20 Septembre*," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, October 29, 1938, p. 1167.

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affirmative." He also revealed that, after Hitler's Nuremberg speech, France had inquired about the attitude of the U.S.S.R. in case of an attack on Czechoslovakia. At that time he had "unambiguously" replied that the Soviet government intended to fulfill its obligations under the pact of mutual assistance in concert with France, and that the Soviet Commissariat of Defense was "ready immediately" to confer with French and Czech military representatives regarding appropriate measures.<sup>59</sup> Some observers believe — although no documentary proof is available on this point — that M. Bonnet conveyed a very different impression both to the British ministers in London and to his Cabinet colleagues.<sup>60</sup>

After two days of agonized discussion, the Czechoslovak government on September 21 unconditionally accepted the Anglo-French proposals "under the strongest pressure from Great Britain and France," adding only that it hoped the French and British governments would guarantee "the new frontiers during their formation."<sup>61</sup> This hope had already been dimmed by the savage outcry in the German press, which clamored for the destruction of Czechoslovakia, this "outpost of Bolshevism" in central Europe.<sup>62</sup> The German outcry belied the optimism of the London *Times*, which stated on September 22 that "any threat

<sup>59</sup> League of Nations, *Verbatim Record of the Nineteenth Ordinary Session of the League of Nations*, Seventh Plenary Meeting, September 21, 1938, pp. 12-13.

<sup>60</sup> Dispatch from Paris, *The Times*, September 23, 1938.

<sup>61</sup> Dispatch from Prague, *ibid.*, September 22, 1938.

<sup>62</sup> Dispatch from Berlin, *ibid.*



to the Czech and Slovak parts of Czechoslovakia would be an entirely different matter from the determination to regain contiguous Germans for Germany." *The Times* also took virtuous satisfaction in pointing out that the solution it had proposed on September 7, after being disavowed by the British Foreign Office, was "being eagerly canvassed" not only by the Foreign Office, "but by the newspapers which hastened to denounce it a few days earlier as a 'sinister blow.'" According to the *London Times*, "the Czech government, Herr Hitler, and the British and French governments" were all agreed "on the principle and the method of the settlement. It only remains for the details to be decided and for good faith to be shown in putting them into effect."<sup>63</sup>

The working-out of details was at this juncture complicated by the claims of Poland and Hungary, which demanded for their minorities treatment similar to that accorded the Sudeten Germans. To the representations made by Warsaw and Budapest the British government replied that it was "concentrating its efforts on the Sudeten problem, on the solution of which the issue of war or peace in Europe depends," expressing the hope that the two eastern-European countries would do nothing to increase the difficulties of an already delicate situation.<sup>64</sup> The German press, meanwhile, gave unstinted support to Polish and Hungarian claims, declaring that an international guarantee

<sup>63</sup> "The Second Visit," *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

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for "a rump Czechoslovakia in which all racial questions are not settled by the same law is . . . a plan without foundation."<sup>65</sup>

### 5. *The Godesberg Memorandum*

Just as Henlein, on the eve of the Berchtesgaden interview, had sought to confront Mr. Chamberlain with a *fait accompli* by demanding self-determination, so on September 22, as the Prime Minister arrived at Godesberg, the Sudeten *Freikorps* crossed the frontier and occupied Eger, while the German press multiplied its efforts to demonstrate that "Red chaos" reigned in Czechoslovakia — an assertion described by the London *Times* as "propaganda in which lying has ceased to be even a fine art."<sup>66</sup>

Mr. Chamberlain, determined above all to avoid resort to force, which might have involved Britain in the ensuing conflict, issued a communiqué at the close of his first conversation with Hitler appealing "most earnestly" to everybody to assist in maintaining "a state of orderliness" and "to refrain from action of any kind that would be likely to lead to incidents."<sup>67</sup> The Prime Minister thought he had only to discuss technical details regarding transfer of Sudeten territory and delimitation of the new frontier — neither of which, according to the London *Times*, could be "done in a hurry." He was consequently "shocked" when, at the beginning of the Thursday afternoon con-

<sup>65</sup> *Berliner Tageblatt*, September 23, 1938.

<sup>66</sup> "Facing the Issue," *The Times*, September 24, 1938.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, September 23, 1938.

versation, Hitler said the Anglo-French territorial proposals "were too dilatory and offered too many opportunities for evasion," and insisted that the areas subject to transfer should be immediately occupied by German troops, outlining the counter-proposals subsequently embodied in the so-called Godesberg memorandum, "except he did not in this conversation actually name any time limit." He also refused to participate in an international guarantee of Czechoslovakia's new frontiers until the claims of other minorities had been satisfied.<sup>68</sup>

"The honourable members," Mr. Chamberlain told the House of Commons on September 28, "will realize the perplexity in which I found myself in being faced with this totally unexpected situation. I had been told at Berchtesgaden that, if the principle of self-determination were accepted, Herr Hitler would discuss with me ways and means of carrying it out. He told me afterwards he never for one moment supposed I should be able to come back and say that the principle was accepted." The Prime Minister added he did not think Hitler was deliberately deceiving him. From Mr. Chamberlain's own words, however, it would appear that Hitler had not expected that France and Britain, to say nothing of Czechoslovakia, would accept his Berchtesgaden proposals, and was even then prepared to use force to separate Sudetenland from the Czechoslovak state. When he found, to his surprise, that the French and British had forced Prague to accept the

<sup>68</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

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principle of self-determination, he pressed for its immediate realization. What shocked Mr. Chamberlain was not the actual substance of Hitler's demands — most of which had already been embodied in the Anglo-French proposals of September 19 — but the method by which the Chancellor proposed to carry them out.

Feeling the need of further consideration, Mr. Chamberlain withdrew "full of foreboding" as to the success of his mission. In view of the difficulty of talking through the German interpreter, Paul Schmidt, and the fact he did not feel sure that what he had been saying had always been understood and appreciated by Hitler, Mr. Chamberlain thought it wise to set down on paper some comments on the German counter-proposals before resuming negotiations.

Shortly after breakfast on September 23 he sent a letter to Hitler expressing readiness to convey the Führer's proposals to Prague, but giving no indication that he would press the Czechs for an affirmative reply. The chief difficulty created by Hitler's proposals, he said, was the suggestion that the affected areas "should in the immediate future be occupied by German troops." Mr. Chamberlain found it impossible to agree to put forward any plan unless he had reason to suppose it would be considered by public opinion in Britain, France, and the world generally "as carrying out the principles already agreed in an orderly fashion and free from the threat of force." An attempt "to occupy forthwith by German troops the areas which will be-

come part of the Reich at once in principle and very shortly afterwards by formal delimitation, would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force.”<sup>69</sup>

In his reply Hitler said the situation in the Sudetenland was “unbearable and will be terminated by me.” What interested him was not recognition of the principle that Sudetenland was to go to Germany, “but solely the realization of this principle, and the realization which both puts an end in the shortest time to the sufferings of the unhappy victims of Czech tyranny, and at the same time corresponds to the dignity of a great power.” He was compelled “to assume the insincerity of the Czech assurances so long as they are not implemented by practical proof.” Only by the withdrawal of Czech troops and the occupation of the evacuated areas by German troops would the grounds for “forcible action” be removed. If Germany found it impossible to have the “clear rights” of Sudeten Germans accepted by way of negotiation, it was “determined to exhaust the other possibilities which then alone remain open to her.”<sup>70</sup>

To this note Mr. Chamberlain replied in his brief second letter of September 23 that, since Hitler maintained “entirely” the position he had taken the previous day, it was now “evidently” his duty, in his capacity as “intermediary,” to transmit the Führer’s proposals to the Czechoslovak government. He con-

<sup>69</sup> “The First Letter of September 23, 1938, from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor,” *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia, September 1938*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>70</sup> “The Reichschancellor to the Prime Minister,” *ibid.*, p. 11.

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sequently requested Hitler to send him a memorandum setting forth these proposals, together with a map showing the area to be transferred subject to the results of the proposed plebiscite, which he intended to forward "at once" to Prague. Meanwhile, he asked for Hitler's assurance that no action would be taken by German troops "to prejudice any further mediation which may be found possible." Since acceptance or refusal of Hitler's terms was a matter for Czechoslovakia to decide, Prime Minister Chamberlain felt he could perform no further service by remaining at Godesberg, and proposed, "therefore, to return to England."<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, Prague, in an appeal to London, had stressed the growing danger of the military situation. In reply to this appeal, and before the Godesberg terms were known outside Germany, the British Foreign Office sent fresh instructions to Mr. Newton, Minister in Prague. In accordance with these instructions, Mr. Newton and the French Minister, M. de Lacroix, informed the Czechoslovak Cabinet at 6.15 p.m. on September 23 that their governments—which had hitherto urged Prague not to envenom the situation by mobilizing—"could no longer take the responsibility of advising" Czechoslovakia for or against mobilization; but mobilization, if it took place, must be on Prague's own responsibility. They did not, as reported in Berlin, advise the Czechoslovak government

<sup>71</sup> "The Second Letter, September 23, 1938, from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor," *ibid.*, p. 14.

to mobilize its troops.<sup>72</sup> Immediately after receipt of this Anglo-French statement — which was first disclosed in an official Prague broadcast of September 25 — the Czechoslovak government ordered general mobilization.<sup>73</sup>

Following an extended conversation between Sir Neville Henderson, Sir Horace Wilson, and Herr von Ribbentrop, Mr. Chamberlain, in the presence of the three men, paid a farewell visit to Hitler, which began at ten o'clock the night of September 23 and lasted until the small hours of the morning. On this occasion Hitler presented the memorandum and map requested by the Prime Minister. "For the first time" Mr. Chamberlain found in the memorandum new proposals, "and spoke very frankly." He dwelt "with all the emphasis" at his command on the risks which would be incurred by German insistence on these terms. He declared that the language and manner of the document, which he described as an ultimatum rather than a memorandum, would profoundly shock public opinion in neutral countries, and "bitterly" reproached the Chancellor for his failure to respond in any way to the efforts he had made to secure peace. In spite of these frank words, the conversation, according to Mr. Chamberlain, was carried on in more friendly terms than that of September 22. Before taking leave of Hitler, Mr. Chamberlain had a few words with him in private. Hitler then declared that the Sudetenland

<sup>72</sup> "Mobilization of Czech Army: A Misleading Account," *The Times*, September 27, 1938.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, September 26, 1938.

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was his last territorial ambition in Europe, and that he had no wish to include non-German peoples in the Third Reich.<sup>74</sup>

The Godesberg memorandum<sup>75</sup> was accompanied by a map on which the Sudeten area to be ceded by Czechoslovakia, shaded in red, went beyond the fifty-per-cent demarcation adopted in the Anglo-French proposals of September 19. The two documents, however, differed less on the extent of territory to be ceded to Germany than on the actual procedure of cession, which, according to Hitler, "should be effected without any further delay." The Godesberg memorandum provided that the area designated on the map as German was to be occupied by German troops on Saturday, October 1, following the withdrawal of Czech armed forces, police, customs officials, and frontier guards, without taking into account whether a plebiscite might prove that this or that part of the area had a Czech majority. The evacuated area was to be handed over in its "present condition" — that is, "without destroying or rendering unusable in any way" military, economic, and public-utility establishments, including airports, gas works, wireless and power stations, and rolling stock. No foodstuffs, goods, cattle, or raw materials were to be removed from the territory.

In certain areas — shaded in green on the Godesberg

<sup>74</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's speech of September 28, 1938.

<sup>75</sup> "Memorandum handed by the Reichschancellor to the Prime Minister on September 23, 1938 (with a Map)," *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia, September 1938*, op. cit., p. 14.



map — the German government agreed to permit a plebiscite before November 25, 1938, to be carried out under the control of an international commission. Only persons who resided in the areas in question on October 28, 1918, or were born there before that date, were to be eligible to vote. This provision automatically excluded many Czechs who had moved into the region after 1918.

The Czech government was to discharge at once all Sudeten Germans serving in its military forces or police, and to liberate all political prisoners of the German race.

Unlike the Anglo-French proposals, the Godesberg memorandum contained no plan for international guarantee of Czechoslovakia's new frontiers, although it left the country no hope of resisting or even surviving military aggression.

### *6. Reaction against Germany*

Publication of the Godesberg terms produced an instant reaction against Germany in Britain and France. "If the memorandum admits of no answer but compliance," said the *London Times* on September 26, "the guillotine has fallen upon mediation and upon every hope of constructive diplomacy. Germany, granted the full satisfaction of racial claims and offered the procedure of equality, will have preferred deliberately to appeal to the sword." General Hertzog of South Africa asserted on September 25 that, if neces-

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sary, his government would carry out its obligations to the League of Nations "at any cost."<sup>76</sup> In Canada the opinion was gaining ground that if the British government should decide that Nazi aggression must be resisted by force of arms, Canada would range itself with other nations of the Empire; and this view was shared by French Canadians, shocked by Hitler's persecution of the Catholic Church.<sup>77</sup>

Even more pronounced was the reaction in France. The French Cabinet, meeting in the afternoon of Sunday, September 25 — just before MM. Daladier and Bonnet left for London — unanimously decided that the Godesberg memorandum must be resisted at all cost. This decision reflected a complete shift in the views of both the press and the French people generally, which over the week-end had "regained every whit of its courage and dignity in the hour of danger."<sup>78</sup> On Saturday, September 24, certain categories of reservists had been recalled, and this "pre-general mobilization" had been carried out in a spirit of grim but calm determination.

Apparently yielding to pressure from Berlin, Mussolini adopted a more bellicose tone, especially in his Padua speech of September 24, when he indicated that although Italy had so far taken no special military precautions, it would do so if other countries continued their preparations, and declared that, in case of a general conflict, the Western powers would be faced

<sup>76</sup> *The Times*, September 26, 1938.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

"with two countries which will form a single bloc." At the same time he revealed the existence of anti-war, and possibly anti-German, feeling, when he said that, if there should prove to be in Italy "men who always peep behind shutters, men with bourgeois hearts, I can tell them that they will be immediately suppressed."<sup>79</sup>

Meanwhile the Godesberg memorandum had been delivered to the Prague government on September 25 by Colonel Mason-MacFarlane, British military attaché. The Czechoslovak government, in a note submitted by M. Masaryk in London, replied on the same day that it had accepted the Anglo-French proposals on the understanding that they represented "the end of demands" to be made on it, and that the two Western powers would guarantee the country's new frontiers in case of "felonious attack." The Godesberg memorandum, it declared, was "a *de facto* ultimatum of the sort usually presented to a vanquished nation and not a proposition to a sovereign state which has shown the greatest possible readiness to make sacrifices for the appeasement of Europe." Hitler's demands in their present form were "absolutely and unconditionally" unacceptable to Czechoslovakia. Against these new "cruel" demands the Prague government felt bound to make its "utmost resistance," and it relied on the two Western powers, "whose wishes we have followed, much against our own judgment, to stand by us in our hour of trial."<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> *Corriere della Sera*, September 25, 1938.

<sup>80</sup> "Letter handed by the Czechoslovak Minister to the Secre-

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In the afternoon of September 25, before the arrival in London of the French ministers, Mr. Chamberlain asked the Czechoslovak government whether, if he proposed an international conference attended by Germany, Czechoslovakia, and other powers to consider the Anglo-French plan and the best method of bringing it into operation, Czechoslovakia would be prepared to take part in this new effort to save peace. M. Masaryk, in a note of September 26, stated that Czechoslovakia was ready to participate in such a conference, hoped that it would have an opportunity to "make representations about the many unworkable features" of the Anglo-French proposals, and asked for "definite binding guarantees that no unexpected action of an aggressive nature would take place during the negotiations and that the Czechoslovak defense system would remain intact during that period."<sup>81</sup>

Events now followed each other with dizzying rapidity. The French ministers, who had arrived in London on Sunday evening, continued their conversations with the British Cabinet Monday morning, September 26, when they were joined by General Gamelin, who later conferred with Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, and General Lord Gort, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Mr. Chamberlain, with the full approval of the French ministers — who

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tary of State for Foreign Affairs, on September 25, 1938," *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia, September 1938*, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>81</sup> "Letter from the Czechoslovak Minister in London to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, September 26, 1938," *ibid.*, p. 18.

returned to Paris Monday afternoon — decided to make a personal appeal to Chancellor Hitler, who was to speak that night at the Berlin Sportpalast.<sup>82</sup> Sir Horace Wilson flew to Berlin, where he arrived before four o'clock that afternoon, and delivered Mr. Chamberlain's note to Hitler in the presence of Sir Nevile Henderson. In this note the British Prime Minister declared that there could be no question of Germany "finding it impossible to have the clear rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia accepted by way of negotiation," and asked the Führer to agree to a German-Czechoslovak conference in the presence of a British representative regarding the method of handing over Sudeten territory. "Surely," said Mr. Chamberlain, "the tragic consequences of a conflict ought not to be incurred over differences in method."<sup>83</sup> Earlier in the day Hitler had received President Roosevelt's message, dispatched on September 26 to Germany, Czechoslovakia, Britain, and France — but not to Italy or the Soviet Union. In this message Mr. Roosevelt expressed the conviction "that all people under the threat of war today pray that peace may be made before, rather than after, war." No problem, he said, was so difficult or so pressing for a solution "that it cannot be justly solved by the resort to reason rather than by the resort to

<sup>82</sup> "From Our Diplomatic Correspondent," *The Times*, September 27, 1938.

<sup>83</sup> "Letter from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor," September 26, 1938, *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia, September 1938*, op. cit., p. 19.

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force." On behalf of the American people and "for the sake of humanity everywhere," Mr. Roosevelt appealed to the interested countries not to break off negotiations "looking to a peaceful, fair, and constructive settlement of the questions at issue."<sup>84</sup>

The German public remained in the dark regarding these various diplomatic moves. Reaction in Britain and France to the Godesberg memorandum had not been revealed in the German press, which gave the impression that the danger of a general European war had been averted; and President Roosevelt's message was not published in Germany until two days after its receipt by Hitler.

In his Sportpalast speech Monday night, September 26, Hitler insisted on maintenance of the October 1 deadline, but did not indicate the specific measures with which he intended to meet Czechoslovak resistance to his demands, thus leaving a margin, however narrow, for further negotiations. He thanked Mr. Chamberlain for his peace efforts; reiterated that, once the Sudeten problem was solved, Germany had "no more territorial problems in Europe"; that when Czechoslovakia had come to terms with its other minorities, he would be ready to guarantee it; and that he had invited the British Legion to police plebiscite areas. He declared, however, that so far as the Sudeten issue was concerned, his patience was at an end; and that

<sup>84</sup> United States, State Department, *Press Releases*, October 1, 1938, p. 219.

war or peace was in the hands of President Beneš, who "will either accept this offer now and give the Germans their freedom at last, or we shall go and fetch this freedom."<sup>85</sup>

In an apparent effort to forestall any irrevocable declaration by Hitler at the Sportpalast, "it was authoritatively stated" in London on Monday night that "if in spite of all efforts made by the British Prime Minister a German attack is made upon Czechoslovakia the immediate result must be that France will be bound to come to her assistance, and Great Britain and Russia will certainly stand by France."<sup>86</sup> This statement, in which, at the eleventh hour, Britain accepted the commitment France had long asked it to undertake, was received with great suspicion by the French press, which raised doubts regarding its authenticity, pointing out the use of suspect phrases such as "it was authoritatively stated" and "Russia" instead of "U.S.S.R." French Foreign Office spokesmen, when questioned about the British statement, declined to confirm it — thus raising the question in the minds of some observers whether M. Bonnet was more disturbed than relieved by Britain's sudden determination to adopt a firm stand.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> English text in *The Times* and *New York Times*, September 27, 1938.

<sup>86</sup> *The Times*, September 27, 1938. This statement was apparently issued without previous consultation between the British Foreign Office and M. Maisky, Soviet Ambassador in London. Immediately after Godesberg, however, Lord De La Warr, British delegate to the League Assembly, had conferred with M. Litvinov in Geneva.

<sup>87</sup> "Quand les fausses nouvelles deviennent vraies," *L'Europe*

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Early Tuesday morning, September 27, Mr. Chamberlain issued a statement in which he thanked Hitler for references to his peace efforts in the Sportpalast speech, and said he could not abandon those efforts "since it seems to me incredible that the peoples of Europe who do not want war with one another should be plunged into a bloody struggle over a question on which agreement has already been largely obtained." The Chancellor, it was evident, had "no faith that the promises made will be carried out." To reassure him, Mr. Chamberlain declared that the British government regarded itself "as morally responsible for seeing that the promises are carried out fairly and fully, and we are prepared to undertake that they shall be so carried out with all reasonable promptitude, provided that the German government will agree to the settlement of terms and conditions of transfer by discussion and not by force."<sup>88</sup> This statement was not published in Germany.

That same day Sir Horace Wilson returned to London with a note from Hitler replying to Mr. Chamberlain's message of September 26. In this note the Führer

*Nouvelle Documentaire*, supplement to *L'Europe Nouvelle*, October 8, 1938, p. iv; also Paul Drailmière: "*Le Sabotage de l'Entente*," *L'Europe nouvelle*, October 8, 1938, p. 1083. Fabre-Luce contends that the September 26 statement was drafted by Sir Robert Vansittart, whom he describes as "chief of the war party in the Foreign Office," and approved by Lord Halifax, and was to that extent authentic, but that it did not represent the point of view of the British government — presumably Mr. Chamberlain. *Histoire secrète de la conciliation de Munich*, op. cit., p. 76. In his speech of October 4, 1938 in the Chamber of Deputies, M. Daladier confirmed the authenticity of the British statement.

<sup>88</sup> *The Times*, September 28, 1938.



rejected the arguments advanced by Czechoslovakia on September 25 and declared that immediate occupation by German troops of the areas to be ceded by Prague was an indispensable security measure; otherwise the Czech government "would be completely in a position to drag out the negotiations on any point they liked, and thus to delay the final settlement." After everything that had passed, Hitler said he could not place any confidence in assurances received from Prague. Countering Czechoslovakia's arguments, he asserted that, after cession of the Sudeten territory, Czechoslovakia "would constitute a healthier, more unified economic organism than before." Prague, in his opinion, was only using his proposal for German occupation "to mobilize those forces in other countries, in particular England and France, from which they hope to receive unreserved support for their aim and thus to achieve the possibility of a general warlike conflagration." He left it to Mr. Chamberlain's judgment whether, in view of these facts, the British Prime Minister should continue his efforts "to spoil such manoeuvres and bring the government in Prague to reason at the very last hour."<sup>89</sup>

Meanwhile, on Sunday, September 25, on a train near Schio, Mussolini had conferred with an envoy from Hitler whose name has not been revealed.<sup>90</sup> On

<sup>89</sup> "Letter from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor," September 27, 1938, *Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia, September 1938*, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>90</sup> Speech of Count Ciano, Italian Foreign Minister, in the Chamber of Deputies, November 30, 1938. *Corriere della Sera*, December 1, 1938.

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the following day, September 26, at 7.30 p.m. — just before Hitler's Sportpalast speech — Bernardo Attolico, Italian Ambassador in Berlin, was informed that the German Chancellor had decided not to wait until October 1, and to mobilize on Wednesday, September 28, at 2 p.m.<sup>91</sup> At that time Mussolini, having completed his tour of the Venetian provinces, was on his way from Verona to Rome, which he reached late that evening. When he received news of Hitler's decision, he immediately ordered partial mobilization of Italian armed forces, which began on September 27. The army recalled 300,000 men, bringing up its total to 550,000; two army corps stationed in Libya were placed on a war footing; the garrisons on the islands of Pantelleria, Elba, and Dodecanesus were strengthened; the navy and air force were made ready for action.<sup>92</sup> This mobilization — which, according to some observers, was begun at Hitler's orders against the wishes of the Italian King and Crown Prince — was carried out with such secrecy that foreign correspondents were not aware of its extent.<sup>93</sup>

At Mussolini's suggestion, the two governments also decided to hold a conference regarding political and military collaboration in case of war. This conference was to have taken place in Munich at noon on September 29 — exactly the time and place subse-

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> The London *Times*, for instance, reported that some reservists, largely carabinieri (who perform the duties of military police) and specialists, had been called to the colors, but that no steps had been taken toward general mobilization.

quently set by Hitler for the four-power conference which sealed the fate of Czechoslovakia. Count Ciano and Herr von Ribbentrop were to have discussed the political aspects of the situation, while Colonel General Wilhelm Keitel, head of the Supreme Command, for Germany, and General Alberto Pariani, Under-Secretary for War, and General Giuseppe Valle, Under-Secretary for Aviation, for Italy, were to have canvassed military plans.<sup>94</sup> It would thus appear that, after Godesberg, Hitler and, at his instance, Mussolini had begun to consider the possibility of a general war.

In Britain defensive units of the auxiliary air force had been called up Monday night, and on Tuesday the fleet — which had been engaged in maneuvers north of Scotland since early September — was mobilized “as a purely precautionary measure.” Once more, as in the case of the British statement of September 26 regarding Anglo-Soviet assistance to France, sections of the French press tried to minimize the significance of the mobilization by declaring that this measure had been taken three weeks earlier — confusing mobilization with naval maneuvers.<sup>95</sup> These developments were followed by Mr. Chamberlain’s broadcast in the evening of September 27, in which the Prime Minister said it seemed impossible “that a quarrel which has already been settled in principle should be the subject of war.” He declared that he found Hitler’s attitude

<sup>94</sup> Speech of Count Ciano in the Chamber of Deputies, November 30, 1938, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup> “Quand les fausses nouvelles deviennent vraies,” *L’Europe Nouvelle Documentaire*, op. cit., p. v.

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“unreasonable,” refused to give up hope for peace, but added he saw nothing further that he could “usefully do in the way of mediation.” In conclusion, he made a statement of policy directed specially to the British Empire;

“However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbour, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in war simply on her account. If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that. I am myself a man of peace to the depths of my soul. Armed conflict between nations is a nightmare to me; but if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel that it must be resisted. Under such a domination life for people who believe in liberty would not be worth living; but war is a fearful thing, and we must be very clear, before we embark on it, that it is really the great issues that are at stake, and that the call to risk everything in their defence, when all the consequences are weighed, is irresistible.”<sup>96</sup>

Following Mr. Chamberlain’s broadcast, the British Broadcasting Company adopted the unusual procedure of first reading in German part of President Roosevelt’s message to Hitler, following this with German and Italian translations of the Prime Minister’s speech. It was hoped that the German public, kept in ignorance of diplomatic moves abroad, might thus gain an inkling of the situation.

During his conversations with Sir Horace Wilson,

<sup>96</sup> *The Times*, September 28, 1938.

Hitler had indicated that if Czechoslovakia did not accept the Godesberg memorandum by 2 p.m. Wednesday, September 28, German troops — which had marched in an unending stream through Berlin Tuesday night — might advance against Czechoslovakia on Thursday morning.<sup>97</sup> Although Hitler, in his Sportpalast speech, had seemed to leave room for further negotiations, he showed an unrelenting attitude in his answer of September 27 to President Roosevelt's message. After rehearsing Germany's grievances against the Versailles Treaty and Czechoslovakia, Hitler repeated that the final decision "whether it wants peace or war" rested with the Prague government, renouncing all responsibility on behalf of the German people and its leaders should further developments, contrary to all his efforts, lead to the outbreak of hostilities.<sup>98</sup> Absence of information regarding the effects of the Godesberg memorandum on French and British public opinion left the German people in the bewildered belief that if war came, Germany would only have to fight Czechoslovakia, and that the entire world opposed President Beneš, whom Hitler had repeatedly singled out for violent contumely. There is little doubt that the German people would have fought had war come. But the prevailing mood, except among young Nazi firebrands, was one of anxious desire for peace, and of apathy toward the Sudeten question. Even blood-curdling tales of al-

<sup>97</sup> Dispatch from Berlin, *ibid.*, September 28, 1938.

<sup>98</sup> State Department, *Press Releases*, October 1, 1938, p. 221.

## DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF MUNICH

leged Czech atrocities in the Sudeten territory brought no spontaneous expression of anti-Czech sentiment or war hysteria.

Fear in Europe and the United States that Hitler might take the irrevocable step of ordering a general mobilization on Wednesday afternoon caused the various interested governments to make a number of simultaneous, but independent, moves to avert resort to force. Shortly after ten o'clock Tuesday night, September 27, President Roosevelt sent a second appeal, addressed to Hitler alone, urging that negotiations be continued "without interruption until a fair and constructive solution has been reached." Nothing, said the President, stood in the way of widening the scope of these negotiations "into a conference of all the nations directly interested in the present controversy" — such a meeting to be held immediately in some neutral spot in Europe. Mr. Roosevelt declared that, should Hitler agree to a peaceful solution, he was convinced that hundreds of millions throughout the world would recognize his action "as an outstanding historic service to all humanity." The United States assumed no obligations in the conduct of the negotiations, but recognized its "responsibilities as a part of a world of neighbors."<sup>99</sup>

On September 28 Mr. Chamberlain sent a personal message to Hitler, answering his note of September 27, delivered by Sir Horace Wilson. The Prime Minister assured Hitler that he could obtain "all essentials with-

<sup>99</sup> State Department, *Press Releases*, October 1, 1938, p. 224.

out war and without delay," and offered to go to Berlin at once to discuss with Hitler and representatives of France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia arrangements for transfer of the Sudeten territory. He reiterated his pledge of September 27 that Britain would "see that promises are carried out fairly and fully and forthwith," and refused to believe that Hitler would take the responsibility of starting a world war "which may end civilization for the sake of a few days' delay in settling this long-standing problem."<sup>100</sup>

At the same time Mr. Chamberlain sent a personal message to Mussolini, informing Il Duce that he had addressed a "last appeal" to Hitler requesting him to abstain from using force to settle the Sudeten problem. He expressed the hope that Mussolini would inform Hitler that he was willing to be represented at the five-power conference suggested by the British Prime Minister, and urge him to agree to a proposal "which will keep all our peoples out of war."<sup>101</sup>

Mr. Chamberlain's action coincided with similar moves by M. Bonnet and President Roosevelt. At 2 a.m. on September 28 news of the Chamberlain message to Mussolini was communicated to M. Bonnet by Sir Eric Phipps, British Ambassador to Paris. M. Bonnet sent a telegram to M. Corbin, French Ambassador in London, instructing him to ask Lord Halifax to urge

<sup>100</sup> "Personal Message sent by the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor on September 28, 1938," *Further Documents respecting Czechoslovakia*, Miscellaneous No. 8 (1938), Cmd. 5848 (London: H.M. Stationery Office; 1938), p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> "Personal Message sent by the Prime Minister to Signor Mussolini on September 28, 1938," *ibid.*, p. 1.

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Mussolini's intervention with a view to immediate negotiations.<sup>102</sup> At the same time M. Bonnet instructed M. François-Poncet, French Ambassador in Berlin, to ask for a personal interview with Hitler the next morning. And at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday, September 28, Mr. William Phillips, American Ambassador to Rome, delivered to the Italian Foreign Office a personal message from President Roosevelt to Il Duce urging continuance of negotiations, which was apparently sent without previous knowledge of similar action by Mr. Chamberlain and M. Bonnet.

Half an hour later that morning Lord Perth, British Ambassador to Rome, called on Count Ciano and, on instructions from London — which preceded receipt of Chamberlain's personal message to Il Duce — asked that Mussolini intervene with Hitler to deter military action against Czechoslovakia pending another attempt at conciliation. Mussolini, both relieved and pleased at this opportunity to act as mediator, personally telephoned Bernardo Attolico, giving him the following instructions: "Go at once to the Führer and, making it clear first that I shall be with him whatever happens, tell him that I advise him to postpone the beginning of operations for twenty-four hours." At that moment Hitler was in conference with M. François-Poncet, who had obtained an appointment at 11.15 a.m. and was suggesting further negotiations. Hitler did not reject these suggestions, but promised to give a reply

<sup>102</sup> Speech of M. Daladier, October 4, 1938, op. cit.; Fabre-Luce: *Histoire secrète de la conciliation de Munich*, op. cit., p. 88.



in writing.<sup>103</sup> After talking with Attolico, Hitler decided to postpone general mobilization for twenty-four hours. This news was immediately communicated by Count Ciano to Lord Perth, who, on returning to the British Embassy, found instructions to deliver the personal message regarding a five-power conference sent that morning by Mr. Chamberlain to Mussolini. Lord Perth had another interview with Count Ciano at noon, and Mussolini once more telephoned to Signor Attolico. About two o'clock that afternoon Hitler telephoned Mussolini, inviting him to a conference at Munich the next day, and informing him that similar invitations had been extended to Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier. Mussolini, accompanied by Count Ciano, left for Munich at 6 p.m.<sup>104</sup>

When the British Parliament, summarily recalled on September 26, assembled at 2.50 p.m. on Wednesday, September 28, to hear Mr. Chamberlain's report on his conversations with Hitler, it was still feared that war might prove unavoidable. Shortly before the House assembled, the British government had received from Lord Perth the news that Mussolini had obtained postponement of German mobilization for twenty-four hours, and in view of these circumstances the Opposition had consented to a swift temporary adjourn-

<sup>103</sup> Speech of M. Daladier, October 4, 1938, *op. cit.*

<sup>104</sup> This account of Mussolini's intervention is based on Count Ciano's speech in the Chamber of Deputies, November 30, 1938, *op. cit.*; a dispatch from Rome, *The Times*, September 29, 1938; and "Hitler and Il Duce talked twice on critical day of Czech Crisis," *New York Times*, November 1, 1938.

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ment of debate.<sup>105</sup> Mr. Chamberlain, in an atmosphere of utmost tension, recited the course of the Czechoslovak crisis since May 1938, leading to a situation which, he said, had had "no parallel since 1914." According to an authoritative British version, Mr. Chamberlain, when he began to speak, did not know "what kind of a message might be coming from Berlin, and a very different climax to the speech had been prepared, including a further appeal for peace."<sup>106</sup> This version has been disputed by observers who believe that Mr. Chamberlain, throughout his negotiations with Hitler, knew that there was no danger of war, and had merely created an atmosphere of unbearable suspense and anxiety to prepare the public in Britain, France, and throughout the world for acceptance of Hitler's terms. In the absence of further evidence, which could be supplied only by the memoirs of the chief participants in the Czechoslovak crisis, this contention cannot be definitively established. Whether through sheer coincidence or superlative timing on Hitler's part, the invitation to the Munich conference was handed to Lord Halifax, who was sitting in the gallery with other members of the House of Lords, and to Lord Dunglass, the Prime Minister's private secretary, just as Mr. Chamberlain was nearing the end of his speech. Immediately after announcing that Hitler, at Mussolini's request, had postponed mobilization, Mr. Chamberlain, having scanned the Foreign Office message, said: "But that is

<sup>105</sup> *The Times*, September 29, 1938.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

not all! I have something further to say to the House yet." He read Hitler's Munich invitation and, amid wild cheers of relief and rejoicing from all parts of the House, added: "I need not say what my answer will be!" At his request, debate was adjourned until the following Monday. Early on Thursday morning, September 29 — the day when war had been expected to start — Mr. Chamberlain left on his third flight to Germany, where he was joined by M. Daladier, who had also greeted this last-minute reprieve with profound relief.

### 7. *The "Big Four"*

The four men who met in the resplendent Führerhaus at Munich to cancel one of the principal chapters of a treaty concluded, to use Hitler's words, in "a suburb of Paris," had one thing in common: they had all lived through the experience of the World War. None of them, whatever his view of the European crisis, had any illusions about the effects of modern warfare on civilian populations. All four regarded themselves as representatives of the new "realism" — which differed from the realism of the "big four" at Versailles only because it dispensed with the subterfuges of an older diplomacy.

Each of the four, in striking degree, typified the average characteristics of his nation. Mussolini, beneath the dramatic gestures and dynamic eloquence usually associated with Italians, remained the clever opportunist who had never hesitated to adjust his

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theories to existing circumstances. Daladier, son of a Carpentras baker, who had pulled himself by his own boot-straps from teacher of history to Premier, was perhaps least representative of his country, with his rather heavy-set manner (which had won him the nickname of "bull") and his lack of mercurial temperament. Regarded by his enemies as an essentially weak character hiding behind a false front of decisiveness, he had redeemed the vacillations of which he had been accused during the February 1934 riots by a fairly resolute domestic policy in 1938, and had shown himself an able Minister of Defense. He feared war; but, with true French skepticism, he did not share Mr. Chamberlain's first enthusiasm regarding the Munich "appeasement," in which he recognized the lineaments of a French defeat. Long favorable to Franco-German reconciliation, Daladier was merely ready to make the best of a bad bargain.

Mr. Chamberlain, whose family had for several decades been associated with foreign and Imperial policy, was the typical English business man with an interest in public affairs such as can be met any day in Birmingham or Manchester. Like Sir Edward Grey, he found a political career compatible with a taste for ornithology — and a passion for fishing. Most Englishmen, no matter how widely traveled, retain an almost naïve insularity which continental Europeans tend to identify, sometimes unjustly, as either stupidity or hypocrisy — or both. To the English, all foreigners, including Americans, are, if not actually "queer," at

least "different." With that high-minded astigmatism which affects even discriminating Englishmen when they address themselves to the European scene, they expect foreign statesmen to act either like gentlemen brought up on the playing-fields of Eton, or like business men intent on striking a mutually advantageous deal. In such a deal the sensibilities of non-English peoples like Czechs and Austrians — whom the British regard with a "master-race" superciliousness not unlike that of the Germans — may be used, without undue compunction, as objects of international barter.

To Mr. Chamberlain's surprise, Hitler turned out to be neither a gentleman nor a business man, but a fanatic — the one species of humanity which the British find completely baffling. Hitler had depicted himself as one who "walks as a somnambulist" and "cannot fail"; and Lord Halifax, who through his negotiations with Gandhi had gained some inkling of fanaticism, described him as a "man from the moon," unable to talk the language of everyday life. Yet for a somnambulist Hitler had so far been unusually shrewd and calculating in his estimate of the European situation. What rendered him incalculable — and from the point of view of the British highly dangerous — was his reputation for sudden fits of hysteria when confronted by resistance. Whether this reputation was merely a convenient myth manufactured for the special benefit of Western statesmen must remain a matter of speculation. It would be presumptuous, however, to assert that Hitler would not have resorted to war

## DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF MUNICH

about Sudetenland if his intuition had dictated this decision. The Führer is a man of peculiar detachment. Unlike Napoleon, he is not concerned with the destinies of a dynasty. He is free, so far as any man can be, from personal attachments. He had, in a sense, nothing to lose and everything to gain by a bold gamble. And, in view of Franco-British vacillations and Ribbentrop's assurances, he did not even believe he was gambling. He played for high stakes against the advice of German generals and diplomats — and won. Since nothing succeeds like success, his victory at Munich became his justification at home and abroad.

### 8. *The Munich Accord*

The four-power accord concluded shortly after midnight on September 30,<sup>107</sup> as shown on pages 182–3, closely followed the terms of the Godesberg memorandum,<sup>108</sup> with only minor modifications concerning the time-limit set for evacuation and an added provision for exchange of populations.

In an annex to the accord, the French and British governments declared that they stood by their September 19 offer regarding international guarantee of Czechoslovakia's new boundaries against unprovoked aggression. The annex added: "When the question of

<sup>107</sup> Agreement concluded at Munich on September 29, 1938, Great Britain, *Further Documents respecting Czechoslovakia*, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Rudolf Kircher, in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, October 2, 1938; Dr. Theodor Seibert: "16 Tage Weltgeschichte," *Völkischer Beobachter*, October 16, 1938.

## GODESBERG

1. Evacuated territory to be occupied by German troops on October 1.

2. Military, commercial, and traffic plants not to be destroyed or rendered unusable. No foodstuffs, goods, cattle, raw materials, etc., to be removed from the evacuated territory.

3. German government to permit a plebiscite in certain areas by November 25, this plebiscite to be carried out under the control of an international commission. All persons residing in areas in question on October 28, 1918 or born there prior to this date to be eligible to vote.

## MUNICH

1. Evacuated territory to be occupied by German troops in four stages, beginning October 1 and ending October 10.

2. Existing installations not to be destroyed; Czechoslovak government to be held responsible for carrying out the evacuation without damage to said installations.

3. An international commission to determine by end of November the territories in which a plebiscite is to be held. This commission will fix the conditions of the plebiscite, taking as a basis those of the Saar plebiscite of 1935, which limited voting to persons residing in the Saar at the time of the signature of the Versailles

Treaty — June 28, 1919.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Subsequently the international commission, over Czech protests, determined the "preponderantly German" areas according to the status of October 28, 1918 (as provided in the Godesberg memorandum). Since no census had been taken in Austria-Hungary since 1910, the international commission used 1910, not 1918, figures.

4. An authoritative German-Czech commission to be set up to settle all further details.
4. Final determination of frontiers to be carried out by the international commission, which is entitled to recommend to the four signatory powers "in certain exceptional cases minor modifications in the strictly ethnographical determination of the zones which are to be transferred without plebiscite."<sup>109a</sup>
5. There will be a right of option into and out of the transferred territories, the option to be exercised within six months from the date of this agreement.
6. The Czechoslovak government, within four weeks, to release from its military and police forces any Sudeten Germans who may wish to be released, and to release Sudeten Germans serving terms of imprisonment for political offenses.

<sup>109a</sup> It was thought inadvisable to include maps in this section, since the frontiers of eastern Europe after Munich remain subject to change. For a good map comparing the London, Godesberg, and Munich terms, cf. *Foreign Affairs*, January 1939.



the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia has been settled, Germany and Italy for their part will give a guarantee to Czechoslovakia.”<sup>110</sup> In a supplementary declaration the four powers stated that if the problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities had not been settled within three months by agreement between the respective governments, they would be discussed at another four-power conference.<sup>111</sup>

On September 30, in addition, Mr. Chamberlain and Chancellor Hitler signed a declaration in which they described the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935 as “symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again”; expressed their determination to settle all questions concerning their two countries by the method of consultation; and declared they would continue their efforts to remove “possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.”<sup>112</sup>

France, which feared that the Anglo-German declaration might break up its alliance with Britain, signed a similar pact with Germany on December 6.<sup>113</sup> In this pact the French and German governments expressed the conviction that “pacific and good neighborly relations” between their two countries constitute one of the essential elements in the consolidation of the European situation and the maintenance of gen-

<sup>110</sup> Agreement concluded at Munich on September 29, 1938, Great Britain, *Further Documents respecting Czechoslovakia*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> *The Times*, October 1, 1938.

<sup>113</sup> *Le Temps* and *New York Times*, December 7, 1938.

## DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF MUNICH

eral peace; declared that "no question of a territorial order remains in suspense" between them; "solemnly" recognized their common frontier as definitive; and resolved, "under the reservation of their special relations with third party powers, to remain in contact on all questions interesting their two countries and to consult together mutually in the event that any ulterior evolution of these questions might risk leading to international difficulties." The Franco-German pact applied only to France's land frontier with Germany and did not cover its possessions in North Africa, which at that very moment were being challenged by Italy. It must also be recalled that the Franco-British alliance operates only in case of a German attack on France, and would not necessarily apply to Italian attack on French possessions overseas.

### *9. Balancing the Books*

In its practical application the Munich accord proved even more drastic than in its original terms. Germany acquired one fifth of Czechoslovakia's territory, containing its fortifications, the major portion of its industries, and a minority of at least 800,000 Czechs.<sup>114</sup> The international commission, composed of a German

<sup>114</sup> German authorities estimate that the Reich obtained 66 per cent of Czechoslovakia's coal, 80 per cent of its lignite, 70 per cent of its steel industry, 70 per cent of its electrical industry, 80 per cent of its cement industry, 90 per cent of its porcelain industry, 86 per cent of its chemical industry, 90 per cent of its paper industry, and 89 per cent of its textile industry. *Völkischer Beobachter*, October 9, 1938.

Foreign Office representative and the French, British, and Italian Ambassadors in Berlin, unquestioningly accepted the terms dictated by Germany to a prostrate Czechoslovakia. Contrary to the Munich accord, which provided for plebiscites in certain areas, the commission decided on October 13 to hold no plebiscites; and on November 21 approved a final delimitation treaty under which Germany obtained additional territory not included in the four zones demarcated at Munich. According to two other treaties signed on the same day, Germany obtained an extraterritorial corridor through Czechoslovakia, in which it will build a military highway controlled by German police and customs guards; and the two countries agreed jointly to dig an Oder-Danube canal, supplementing the Rhine-Main-Danube canal already being constructed by the Third Reich. Stripped of its fortifications and principal industries, its system of communications severed by the German corridor, Czechoslovakia has become an economic appendage of Nazi Germany. The only state in eastern Europe which had attempted to develop democratic institutions has sought safety in adopting the totalitarian, anti-Semitic, and anti-Communist policies of its formidable neighbor.

The Anglo-French guarantee of Czechoslovakia's new frontiers, which was to compensate Prague for its sacrifices in the cause of peace, proved wholly illusory. The Western powers contented themselves with perfunctory protests when Poland and Hungary, backed by Mussolini, claimed their share of the Czechoslovak

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spoils. These claims were settled not by another four-power conference, as provided at Munich, but by an award rendered by German and Italian representatives at Vienna on November 2. The Vienna award, in turn, represented Hitler's determination to balk Warsaw, Budapest, and Rome plans for a common frontier between Poland and Hungary, which might have served as a new line of defense against German expansion. Territorial concessions, contrary to the expectations of Mr. Chamberlain and his supporters in other countries, failed to appease Nazi extremists, who merely accelerated their drive for totalitarianism by the expropriation and suppression of racial and religious minorities.

No sooner had Britain, France, Germany, and Italy concluded the Munich accord than public opinion throughout the world, having recovered from its initial feeling of relief, divided sharply on the merits of the settlement. Acclaimed by some as the first step toward European appeasement, it was denounced by others as the most flagrant betrayal in history, merely postponing a general war. While it is as yet impossible to pass definitive judgment on the Munich accord, certain general conclusions may already be reached.

1. As early as the second week in May 1938, and possibly earlier, Mr. Chamberlain had come to the conclusion that a central-European crisis, in which Britain might become involved because of its alliance with France, could be averted only by eventual cession of the predominantly German areas of Sudetenland. His

principal endeavor henceforth was to persuade the Prague government to accept this drastic solution, and meanwhile prevent Hitler from occupying the disputed territory by force. Mr. Chamberlain believed — and in this he probably reflected a large majority of British opinion — that the Sudeten issue, implying, as it did, denial of self-determination to Germans, was not sufficiently clear-cut to justify war in the eyes of the British people, least of all in the Dominions, which at the 1937 Imperial Conference had urged Britain to conciliate potential aggressors in Europe. The Prime Minister also felt that, in case war could not be averted, he would stand a much better chance of obtaining the aid of the Dominions, and possibly the United States, if he could demonstrate that all possibilities of conciliation had been exhausted.

2. While the British Cabinet presented an outwardly united front during the Czechoslovak crisis, the resignation of Alfred Duff Cooper, First Lord of the Admiralty, immediately after Mr. Chamberlain's return from Munich, and the rumored opposition of several other ministers to the Munich settlement, indicate that the Cabinet was divided on this critical issue. Many observers also believe that the advice of Foreign Office experts like Sir Robert Vansittart, Sir Alexander Cadogan, and others was disregarded by Mr. Chamberlain, who charted his own course with the assistance of an inner Cabinet — composed of Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare, and Lord Halifax — and of Sir Horace Wilson, his adviser on industrial affairs, who had had

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no previous diplomatic experience. An important part in the decisions of the Chamberlain government was also played by the so-called Cliveden set, with which Lord Astor, owner of the London *Times*, Geoffrey Dawson, its editor, and Lord Lothian, advocate of reconciliation with Germany, are usually identified.

3. The French government had repeatedly declared, following Germany's annexation of Austria, that it would faithfully fulfill its treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia. Several members of the Cabinet, however — notably M. Bonnet — supported by a large section of the press, searched, after Hitler's Nuremberg speech, for a loop-hole which might justify termination of France's obligations to Czechoslovakia. M. Bonnet and his supporters questioned France's military preparedness, expressed doubts regarding the economic and military strength of the Soviet Union, and minimized the value of various moves after Godesberg indicating that Britain would come to France's aid in case of war over Czechoslovakia.

4. The parliaments of France and Britain were not consulted by their governments during the crisis, and were summoned after September 30 merely to ratify a *fait accompli*. While this procedure may appear necessary when democratic states are faced with an external emergency, its effects on the future of parliamentary democracy cannot fail to arouse profound apprehension.

5. The governing circles of both France and Britain were susceptible to the ideas, publicized by Hitler,

that Communism was a threat to European civilization;<sup>115</sup> that war would precipitate social revolution, which would spell the doom of capitalism and redound to the interest of the Soviet Union; and that the U.S.S.R., because of economic disorganization and the recent army purge, was not prepared to give effective aid to Czechoslovakia.

It would be misleading, however, to assert that Left groups in France and Britain were unanimously hostile to the Munich settlement. Many of them — especially among French Socialists and syndicalists — were pacifists by conviction, opposed war, and favored a policy of reconciliation with Germany. The French Communist party was the only Left group which consistently advocated resistance to Hitler's demands.<sup>116</sup>

6. The French and British people were deeply anxious to avoid war, but stoically endured the suspense of the crisis, and allowed themselves to be mobilized with little or no sign of defeatism, which was much more noticeable in the press than among the public generally. The Italians, already wearied by the Ethiopian and Spanish campaigns, were reluctant to fight on the side of Germany, which, despite official boasts regarding the strength of the Rome-Berlin axis, remained unpopular in Italy. The Germans, although assailed by violent anti-Czech propaganda, displayed no en-

<sup>115</sup> Cf., for example, the Marquess of Londonderry: *Ourselves and Germany* (London: Robert Hale & Co.; 1938).

<sup>116</sup> Raymond Millet: "La Politique extérieure divise les partis d'extrême-gauche et les milieux syndicalistes," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, October 15, 1938, p. 1112.

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thusiasm for war, but were kept in ignorance of diplomatic developments and were led to believe that the worst eventuality would be a lightning war with Czechoslovakia.

7. Mussolini was disturbed by the annexation of Austria, and by growing Nazi influence in eastern Europe and the Balkans, which he had once considered Italy's sphere of interest. During the Czechoslovak crisis he supported the claims of Poland and Hungary in the hope that, if these two countries obtained a common frontier, they would constitute a more reliable line of defense against German expansion than Czechoslovakia, which, in his opinion, was undermined by minority conflicts and Soviet influence. Despite bellicose speeches, Il Duce apparently feared a general war; hoped that, if worst came to worst, the conflict could be localized; and saw in the crisis an opportunity to conclude the Western four-power pact he had first proposed in 1933, soon after Hitler had become Chancellor.

8. The United States, despite the attempts of Congress to formulate a fool-proof policy of neutrality, did not remain neutral during the Czechoslovak crisis, when American public opinion displayed an unmistakably anti-German trend. While declining any responsibility for European negotiations, President Roosevelt, with the approval of a majority of the American people, urged all interested governments to persevere in their efforts to avert war — although he could not have foreseen the terms on which peace



would be finally secured. His two appeals — the first of which was published in Germany two days after its delivery to Hitler, while the second was withheld until after Munich — produced a favorable impression in France and Britain. It seems probable, however, that Hitler's sudden realization after Godesberg that the tide might turn toward a general war, which he had not anticipated, reinforced by Mussolini's eleventh-hour intervention, was the determining factor in his decision to summon the Munich conference.

## VI. QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED AT MUNICH



AMONG THE MANY tangled motives which in the minds of democratic peoples seemed to justify the Anglo-French retreat at Munich, the two which loomed most important were the reluctant admission that France and Britain were inferior to Germany in military power, and the acceptance, not always conscious, of Hitler's thesis that Communism was a threat to European civilization.

*1. Were France and Britain Unprepared for War?*

No foreign military expert, however well informed, could determine positively in September 1938 whether France and Britain were as unprepared for a major conflict as the governments of the two countries have asserted since Munich. Nor did anyone outside German military circles know the full extent of Germany's war preparations, which it was obviously good policy on the part of the Nazis to exaggerate as much as possible. It has been argued that the German army, which Hitler did not begin to develop in earnest until 1935, would have proved inferior to that of France, especially if forced to fight on two fronts by fulfillment of the Franco-Czechoslovak alliance; that it lacked a sufficient number of officers and trained reserves; that the raw material resources of Nazi Germany were unequal to the strain of a prolonged war; that the much touted fortifications of the Siegfried Line were far from completion; and that the German navy, maintained by the Anglo-German naval treaty of 1935 at a thirty-five-per-cent ratio of the British fleet, would have been no match for that of Britain in the North Sea, in spite of the Reich's newly constructed midget submarines.

Whatever the merits of these arguments, their effectiveness was vitiated by the brutal fact that the military situation had undergone a drastic change since 1914. Wars are no longer fought with mass armies,

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which are in danger of being immobilized by trench warfare, as they already were in the World War. They are not fought with navies, whose chief function might have been another blockade of Germany. The next World War threatened to be fought, in the first instance, neither on land nor sea, but in the air. And in the air Germany had achieved superiority of production over Britain, and still more over France—assuming that each of the democracies would have to withstand a German air attack single-handed. By skillfully concentrating its limited financial and raw-material resources on the construction of airplanes in factories efficiently co-ordinated and manned under Marshal Göring's four-year plan for self-sufficiency, Germany was in a position to threaten Britain with unlimited air warfare. The British had already had a taste of such warfare in 1914-18, and its horrors had only recently been demonstrated at Barcelona and Shanghai. Nor did the British have any illusion that Hitler would scruple to destroy London if such *Schrecklichkeit* seemed the only method to achieve his objectives.

While military experts differ widely as to the exact number of first-line airplanes possessed by Germany in September 1938, the figure most frequently mentioned hovers between a minimum of 3,000 and a maximum of 5,000. Many neutral observers agree that the figure of 10,000, prominently featured in dispatches from Berlin at the height of the Czechoslovak crisis, is a gross exaggeration. Even the more moderate estimates,

however, would indicate that in September 1938 Germany had at least twice as many first-line airplanes as Britain, where it was revealed in the course of House of Commons debates during the spring of 1938 that the Royal Air Force — admirably trained and commanded — had only 1,770 airplanes at its disposal, and hoped to have 2,400 by 1940, the date when British rearmament was to reach its zenith. Continued criticisms, by press and Parliament, regarding the slowness of British airplane production — which necessitated the purchase of 400 airplanes from the United States in June 1938 — brought frequent changes of personnel in the Air Ministry, but no notable speed-up in production. Among the various reasons assigned for this situation — strikingly different from that in 1918, when British industry was geared to produce 30,000 old-type fighting airplanes — were frequent changes in Air Ministry specifications, lack of engines and parts, and shortage of skilled labor, which the trade unions refused to dilute with unskilled workers.

Similar difficulties confronted the French airplane industry, nationalized by the Blum government in 1936-7. In contrast to Germany, where production was said to average between 400 and 600 airplanes a month, France barely maintained a monthly average of 100 machines. Attempts of Rightist critics to blame this condition on the reluctance of workers to modify the forty-hour week were challenged by the General Confederation of Labor — as well as several prominent airplane-manufacturers — who contended that produc-

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tion difficulties were due to faulty management and administrative disorganization. Equally serious was the French practice of developing a perfect prototype machine by a series of experiments, rather than selecting a workable model and turning it out in mass production, as is done in Germany and the United States.

Those who saw in the Munich accord the culmination of a capitalist plot to unite France, Britain, Germany, and Italy in a drive against the Soviet Union believed that the French and British governments had never intended to create a war machine capable of challenging the Fascist dictatorships. They contended that the plutocratic régimes of the democracies, controlled by financial interests, merely went through the gestures of rearmament to screen the surrender of Ethiopia and Austria and the partition of Czechoslovakia.

This view, which does not lack a measure of credibility, is, like all generalizations, too simple to be entirely true. The fundamental difficulty in France and Britain was not the Machiavellian scheming of the ruling oligarchy or the technical deficiency of armament industries. It was the profound, almost agonizing reluctance of their peoples to follow Germany's example and devote all their energies and resources to military purposes. This reluctance — call it pacifism, or lethargy, or defeatism — was probably the greatest single handicap of the democracies in their fateful confrontation with the dictatorships. Peoples which still remembered the futile struggle of 1914-18, and felt

a desire to enjoy other things in life than the pleasures of militarism, were at a fatal disadvantage when dealing with German Nazis, inspired by the desire to avenge the wrongs they felt Germany had suffered at Versailles. The rapid mobilization effected without a murmur in France and Britain during the Czechoslovak crisis indicates that the peoples would not have rebelled against war if war had come. What they were unwilling to do was to sacrifice their entire lives, in time of peace, to preparation for the next war. The harrowing dilemma which faced France and Britain in 1938 was that, in order to meet the challenge of Germany and Italy, they would have had to transform themselves into totalitarian dictatorships by adopting similar political, economic, and spiritual controls. The choice thus seemed to lie between a conflict with dictatorships in the name of a democracy which would have had to be immediately jettisoned for the sake of military efficiency, or submission to the spread of dictatorial rule as Germany gained ascendancy on the European continent.

The first alternative seemed all the more unpalatable because many groups in France and Britain sympathized, at least covertly, with Hitler's belief that Communism, denounced by the Nazis as an alien faith from the East identified with the Jews, was in danger of gaining a foothold in central and eastern Europe. In their opinion Nazism, repugnant though it might be, offered a bulwark against the anti-capitalist doctrines of Moscow. For, in spite of all signs to the contrary,

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men of property in the western democracies persisted in believing that Nazism, unlike Communism, would safeguard private enterprise and initiative against the onslaught of social revolt.

### 2. *Was it Communism that Hitler Feared?*

Fear of Communism, fanned by Nazi propaganda, spread like wildfire not only in Europe, but throughout the world. This fear overlooks two facts: that Communism has not flourished in the political climate of countries with a long tradition of private property; and that the social system now existing in the Soviet Union can hardly be described as Communism in the Marxist sense.

When the Soviet government came to power in 1917, Russia was an economically backward country, the majority of whose population were engaged in agriculture under medieval conditions, and whose natural resources and public works were to a large extent financed or controlled by foreign capital. Russia in 1917 cannot be compared with France, or Britain, or Germany, or even Poland and Hungary. It can best be compared with Mexico or Spain, where peasant revolt against big landlords and the exactions of the Church have synchronized with the demand of the urban proletariat for the expropriation of foreign, as well as native, capitalists. Only a third of the Russian peasants had secured private property in land before the World War, and most of them had been suffering



from acute land-hunger since their emancipation in 1861. For them Lenin's promise of "bread, land, and peace" seemed to open the gates of earthly paradise. Their chief desire was not to become state employees cultivating the land for the benefit of society as a whole, but to break up the estates of the Church and the big landlords and acquire personal possession of individual farms. They were not Communists; they were potential peasant proprietors. The only group which at that time was ready to embrace Communism was the urban workers, who constituted three per cent of the population. The workers had suffered all the evils of the Industrial Revolution, which had not reached Russia until the end of the nineteenth century, and in the real sense of the *Communist Manifesto* "had nothing to lose but their chains."

When the Soviet government discovered that the desire of peasants for private property in land threatened to result in parceling of big estates into small, unworkable farms, and that the less impoverished among them — known as *kulaks* — might eventually control grain-production, thus endangering the food and raw-material supply of the Socialist state, it launched a drastic campaign to collectivize agriculture. This campaign, which met with the most serious resistance in the Ukraine, where peasant proprietorship had been widespread before the war and where nationalist disaffection played into the hands of German agitators, resulted in the practical elimination of individual peasants by 1938. The peasants are now, to all effects and

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purposes, attached to their respective collectives by the fact that the state has a monopoly of farm machinery, notably tractors, and that without state aid the peasants would no longer be able to cultivate their large-scale farms. The state, however, has been forced to arouse peasant incentive before each spring sowing by various concessions in the matter of manufactured goods and special privileges — even if these concessions are often withdrawn, once the harvest is over.

In spite of collectivization, Communism, as defined by the Marxist formula: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs," cannot be said to exist in Russia — if, indeed, it can ever exist anywhere in unadulterated form. Peasants are allowed to have their own homes, private gardens, pigs and fowls, and small agricultural implements. They can sell the produce of their gardens and barnyards in open markets, where they frequently charge prices fifty and a hundred per cent higher than those prevailing in state stores. Industrial workers, too, are encouraged to increase production by piece-work rates and bonuses. Substantial material inducements are offered to highly skilled workers, technicians, and professional men, whose salaries and various privileges, relatively speaking, offer at least as sharp a contrast to those of unskilled workers as that which exists in capitalist countries. The Constitution of 1936 recognizes the right of the Soviet citizen to own personal property such as a savings account, government bonds, a house in the country, an automobile, books, clothes, and furniture,

as well as the right to inherit personal property. His ability to acquire such possessions — once the production of consumers' goods has caught up with demand — is limited only by his ambition and earning capacity.

Growing differentiations in incomes have fostered the emergence of a new bourgeoisie, composed, like that of Western countries, of industrial managers, technicians, and professional men drawn from the ranks of workers and peasants. The rapid growth of this bourgeoisie — numerically small in Czarist Russia — has been accompanied by unexpected emphasis on "bourgeois" virtues, despised before the war by the Russian intelligentsia. The unconventional mores of the early revolutionary years, which both shocked and delighted Western tourists, have given way to copy-book moralities reminiscent of the Victorian age, extolling family ties and frowning on abortion and divorce.

Recognition of certain forms of personal property in the Soviet Union has been deplored by Trotsky and some foreign Marxists as a surrender to the fleshpots of bourgeois life. Soviet commentators, however, argue that personal property is compatible with Socialism and even Communism, provided it serves the private use of the worker and his family and does not become an instrument for exploitation of the labor of others. What the Soviet government opposes is not individual ownership of personal property, but accumulation of capital by the individual for investment in private enterprises employing hired labor. Only the reappear-

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ance of such enterprises, according to Soviet authorities, could be described as restoration of capitalism. Soviet leaders contend that their objective is not egalitarianism in the narrow sense of placing all workers on the same economic level, but a system which will provide opportunities for the maximum development of the individual and make available to all the material comforts reserved for a few in capitalist states.

When Trotskyists denounce inequality in material rewards as a retreat from Socialism in the direction of Fascism, Soviet leaders reply (not without sophistry) that the U.S.S.R. has reached the stage not of Communism, but of Socialism. At this stage, they argue, non-material stimuli are not sufficient to arouse the enthusiasm of the average worker, who must be offered material incentives if he is to remain on the job, increase his output, and improve his technical training. While Soviet workers and employees receive widely varying remuneration, they have no opportunity to invest their earnings in private enterprises from which they would derive private profit—in other words, they have no opportunity to become capitalists. The workers can use their earnings in only one of two ways. They can spend them on goods produced and sold by the state; or save them either by subscribing to state loans, on which they usually receive interest, or depositing them in savings banks. They know that, in the long run, both state loans and savings deposits will serve to increase the capital resources not of private corporations, but of the Soviet state and its enterprises.

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The need for accumulating personal savings plays a relatively unimportant part in the calculations of the Soviet wage-earner, who is provided by the state with various forms of insurance and social benefits from the cradle to the grave.

The Bolshevik Revolution, telescoping into twenty years the social and economic transformations wrought by a century in western Europe, held out to workers throughout the world the vision of a community which would abolish the exploitation of man by man. In the gray light of the post-revolutionary period, which Trotsky regards as the Soviet Thermidor, this ideal appears as yet far from realization. Soviet workers and technicians — provided their political antecedents are unimpeachable — have an opportunity to work in the employ of the state at wages which, although still low in terms of purchasing power, are slowly rising; and may, provided the production of consumers' goods continues to expand, improve their material lot by bonuses for technically improved work. These economic opportunities, which stimulate the enthusiasm of the young generation, living in a state of intellectual autarchy, have not yet been matched with civil liberties familiar to the democracies of the West. Soviet leaders contend that the Russian proletariat, whose interests are represented by the ruling Communist party, actually enjoys greater freedom than that of other countries, where workers are exploited not by the state, as in the U.S.S.R., but by the propertied classes. Freedom of press or ballot-box, they assert, offers cold

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comfort to unemployed workers in Western countries, who are primarily concerned with obtaining a job.

It should also be recalled that the sense of individual dignity and freedom, which the West inherited from the Renaissance and the Reformation, was alien to the Russian masses before the revolution. Soviet workers and peasants, intent on securing a living, are for the most part unaware of the absence of liberties they never enjoyed. Many of them are conscious of their position as a ruling class, and the innumerable elections and conferences in which they are invited to participate give them a sense of exercising power over the country's affairs — even if final decision rests with a small group of Communist leaders. There is no lack of discontent among workers and peasants. This discontent, however, is concerned less with the fundamental concepts of the Soviet state than with unsatisfied material wants, particularly shortage of housing and consumers' goods. Soviet authorities encourage such complaints under the name of self-criticism, in the hope that it will goad a backward people and a lagging bureaucracy into action. But questions of larger policy, especially the basic principles on which the Soviet system rests at the present time, remain beyond the reach of self-criticism.

If the brave new world anticipated by foreign sympathizers has not materialized in the Soviet Union — to the embittered surprise of erstwhile admirers like André Gide — its eventual appearance is not excluded once the Soviet state, having emerged from the more

acute period of the revolutionary process, attains a measure of political and economic stability. Appraisal of the Soviet Union must await history's answer to the question whether Soviet Socialism — or any form of Socialism — could have been established without resort to coercion. If not, then Socialism must ultimately justify the means it has employed by providing the masses not only with a standard of living comparable to that now attainable under capitalism, but with the non-material values which under any system constitute the stuff and substance of civilization.

### *3. How does Communism Differ from Nazism?*

Whatever the defects or virtues of the Soviet system, how does it differ from Nazism, which offers itself as an antidote against the virus of Bolshevism? The principal objections raised against the Soviet régime — that it involves expropriation of private property, strangles individual liberty, and seeks to uproot organized religion — can with equal effectiveness be made against Nazism. Germany, like the Soviet Union, is governed by a single party which enjoys a monopoly of political and economic power, and rules by arbitrary decree. In Germany, as in the Soviet Union, the liberties of individuals and dissident groups are ruthlessly subordinated to the interests of the totalitarian state. In Germany, as in the Soviet Union, organized religion — be it Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish — has been subjected to vilification and persecution.

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If all private property has not yet been expropriated in Germany, this respite should not be interpreted as an attempt to shield the capitalist class, which originally saw in Nazism a safeguard against Communism. What the Nazis have introduced in Germany is a form of graduated Bolshevism, directing their first attack not against the capitalist class as a whole, but against Jewish capitalists, excoriated on racial rather than economic grounds. Yet once Jewish bankers, industrialists, and business men have been forced to surrender their property by methods no less drastic and brutal than those employed by Russian Communists in 1917, the Nazi government may train its guns on the Catholic Church, which owns vast properties, especially in Austria — again screening economic motives by denunciation of alleged religious interference in politics. Nor is there reason to expect that the Nazis will stop at this point, and that purely Aryan, non-religious property can consider itself permanently insured against expropriation.

True, the Nazis in Germany, like the Fascists in Italy, have tolerated a measure of private initiative — but only in a degree necessary for the maximum efficiency of the country's economy, and within limits rigidly prescribed by the state. To this extent the special inducements offered by the Soviet government to arouse the initiative of technicians and industrial managers bear comparison with the Nazi system of controlled capitalism, especially in view of the fact that the Nazis came to power in a highly industrialized



state, while the Communists took over a predominantly agricultural country, weakened by prolonged war, where modern industry had only begun to develop.

Once the Soviet Union has achieved a degree of industrialization comparable to that of Germany, there may be little material difference between the status of the worker and white-collar employee under Nazism or Sovietism. In both countries they are assured employment either in enterprises state-controlled (Russia) or state-regulated (Germany), or through conscription for public works like the Siegfried Line fortifications in Germany or the canal from the Baltic to the White Sea in Russia. In addition to wages, regulated by the state, and various forms of insurance, also determined by the state with the advice of state-controlled trade unions, they enjoy in both countries such privileges as the *Strength through Joy* excursions in Germany, or vacations in Crimean rest-homes in the Soviet Union. Their children, uncontaminated by contact with religious education, are trained in state-controlled schools to observe the doctrines of the ruling party and, when they grow up, to undergo military drill for the protection of the Nazi — or Socialist — fatherland. If they grumble or rebel against the prevailing system, they may be punished in both countries by imprisonment, hard labor in concentration camps, or death. In both countries the average man and woman may, at least temporarily, be satisfied with a steady job, three meals a day, and a roof over their

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heads, without worrying about such abstractions as liberty to vote or freedom of the press. The real victims, both in Russia and in Germany, are intellectuals other than technicians, who are stifled by régimes which suppress all unofficial thought and have no choice but to succumb or rebel.

Many Western liberals, repelled by Soviet dictatorial methods, found comfort in the thought that the U.S.S.R., in contrast to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, was at least a force for peace and could thus logically co-operate with the democracies against Fascism. The unquestionable preference of Soviet leaders for preservation of the European *status quo* was due not so much to Communist doctrine as to the fact that the Soviet Union, rich in territory and natural resources, had more to gain by peace than by war under Stalin's program of "building Socialism in one country." True, the Soviet government seemed to have forsworn the territorial ambitions of the czars, especially in Asia. But Russia, before Hitler, did not hesitate to practice that new form of imperialism which consists in employing all the blandishments of propaganda to win the support of political groups in other countries for the Soviet — or Nazi — cause. In the field of propaganda, as in that of industrial production, the Russians found themselves handicapped not merely by Western hostility toward Communism, but by the superior technique of Nazi Germany, at many points modeled on their own.

Differences in the social, political, and economic

conditions of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia too often obscure the basic similarities between Nazism and Soviet Socialism. Both movements represent a deep-seated revolt of the class disinherited by the preceding social system — urban proletariat and peasants in Russia, the lower middle class in Germany — against privileged groups: the Church, the aristocracy (which in Germany was typified by the officer class), and the capitalist bourgeoisie. In spite of its outwardly reactionary character, Nazism is, for Germany, a revolutionary movement directed at the destruction of remnants of feudalism and certain forms of capitalist accumulation specifically associated, for purposes of propaganda, with the Jews. Its objective is the establishment of an equalitarian society in which all individuals, irrespective of rank or wealth, will be subordinated to the interests of the totalitarian state. Nazism is no more a respecter of persons or traditions than Communism was in 1917. Both movements have performed the task of demolishing outworn institutions. The question is whether their excavations will provide the foundations for some form of democracy similar to that of Western states, or for the development of entirely new political and economic systems.

#### *4. Was Communism a Danger in Central and Eastern Europe?*

Wherever Nazism has confronted Communism in central and eastern Europe the outcome of the battle was

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never in doubt. Communism failed to gain ground outside of Russia either in the immediate post-war years, when disillusionment and despair offered fertile soil for extremist movements, or during the equally trying years of the world depression. Where Communism did secure a foothold, as in Hungary in 1921 or Germany in pre-Nazi days, it prepared the way not for Communist success but for the triumph of reaction, which used fear of Communism as its most effective weapon to rally the nation in defense of another form of extremism. The greatest disservice rendered by Communism to Europe was not that it created Communist régimes, but that — to use the Hegelian formula — Communism and reactionary nationalist capitalism, the two antitheses, found their synthesis in Nazism, which then proceeded to destroy them both. Native Communist movements, notably in Germany, were also injured by their blind reliance on the commands of the Third International in Moscow, which, instead of appealing to the national emotions of various countries — as Nazism has successfully done — alienated them by its utter disregard for local conditions. The emphasis of the Third International on class warfare — which has been and, as long as nations exist, may continue to be subordinated to national feelings — made it difficult for Communism to win adherents except among discontented intellectuals or destitute workers and peasants, especially in the countries of central and eastern Europe which during the post-war years passed through a period of acute nationalism.

For the peoples of that region, where peasant private property is more widespread than it was in Russia in 1917, the Soviet system has far less appeal than Nazism. True, the peasant masses of Poland, Hungary, and Rumania want the break-up of large estates and abolition of the remnants of feudalism. But for them it is Nazism, not Communism, that offers a palatable revolutionary formula. Hitler's theories, combining the three major trends of post-war agitation in this area — anti-Semitism, anti-Communism, and anti-capitalism — have no rivals in countries where the peasants demand expropriation of the Church and the big landlords, but want to acquire private possession of the land, and hope that the Nazis, unlike the Communists, will protect the property of the "little man." Polish and Hungarian peasants who have gone to Germany for seasonal agricultural labor return home with enthusiastic accounts of the benefits enjoyed by farmers in the new Reich, and long for the day when they, too, can substitute neat farms operated by the most modern methods for the tumbledown villages and antiquated strip system of agriculture to which so many of them have been immemorially condemned. For if Nazism appears to Westerners as a reactionary movement which has turned the clock back in Germany, it is regarded as a long step forward by the peoples of eastern Europe, subjected for centuries to exploitation by native landlords and foreign capitalists, who all too often were the sole outposts of Western democracy in this region. Eastern Europe was ripe for revolution in

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1938. The only question was whether this revolution would be brought in the baggage vans of an expanding Germany, or voluntarily effected at the eleventh hour by the ruling classes of Poland, Hungary, and Rumania — and Germany's annexation of Austria and Sudetenland made the problem one for immediate decision.

### 5. *Would Russia have Helped Czechoslovakia?*

If Communism did not represent a serious danger for central and eastern Europe, why did Nazi propaganda harp so persistently and so violently on this theme? Communism was, of course, a convenient stalking-horse for Germany's eastward expansion. But fear of Pan-Communism had also taken the place in German imagination of that pre-war bogey, Pan-Slavism. What Germany feared was not that Communist doctrines would gain ground outside of Russia, but that the Slav countries of eastern Europe and the Balkans — notably Czechoslovakia — would drift into the orbit of the Soviet Union and, like Serbia in 1914, invoke Russian aid to block Germany's expansion to the east. This fear found concrete justification in 1935, when the U.S.S.R. concluded pacts of mutual assistance not only with France, but with France's ally, Czechoslovakia, and undertook to improve its relations with Prague's Little Entente partners, Rumania and Yugoslavia. The reconstruction, in a new form, of Russia's pre-war ties with France and the Balkan countries created the danger that Germany might once more be forced,

as in 1914, to fight on two fronts. This danger had to be eliminated at all costs. And the least costly method was to proclaim that Czechoslovakia, as long as it remained an ally of Russia, was a Communist thrust at the heart of central Europe.

By a fairly obvious paradox, Nazi denunciation of the Communist danger had as its corollary the equally vehement assertion that the Soviet Union had been irretrievably weakened by the purges of 1936-8; that its army, and especially its air force, were disorganized and shorn of reliable leadership; and that Soviet defense industries would prove unequal to a major conflict. These assertions found ready hearing in Britain, where the Tories had no love lost for Russia, and in France, where many people formerly enthusiastic about the Soviet mutual-assistance pact had been disheartened or disillusioned by the Moscow treason trials. British governing circles found the idea of collaboration with Russia repugnant, not only because Communism was regarded as a threat to private property, but because alleged Communist intrigues in India and the Near East still disturbed the complacency of British imperialists. In France the idea of a Russian alliance had been favored chiefly by extreme nationalists, who saw in it a bulwark against German expansion, and by the extreme Left, who sympathized with the Communist cause. It found little support among M. Daladier's Radical Socialists — ruling group of the Popular Front in 1938 — or even among the moderate Socialists of M. Blum, repelled by the dictatorial meth-

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ods of the Soviet government and reluctant to be identified with French Communist activities. Franco-Soviet relations had suffered an eclipse even before the Czechoslovak crisis reached the breaking-point. Nor had they been improved by the fact that France's allies in eastern Europe — Poland, Rumania, and Yugoslavia — feared Communism more than Nazism, and opposed Franco-Soviet rapprochement.

The ruling classes of France and Britain were thus in a mood to accept the theory that Russia, in any case, would not have helped Czechoslovakia, or that if it had, this aid would have been neither sufficiently prompt nor sufficiently effective to save Czechoslovakia from dismemberment — an operation more painlessly performed at Munich. In the absence of adequate information, it would be presumptuous to assert that Russian assistance would have protected Czechoslovakia against German invasion. The Soviet government, on several occasions both before and after Berchtesgaden declared in no uncertain terms that it would aid Prague, always on the condition — specified in its mutual-assistance pacts with France and Czechoslovakia — that France would simultaneously come to the aid of the Czechs within the framework of the League. This condition was not merely a diplomatic evasion. It simply indicated that the Soviet Union — which had never had any illusions regarding Anglo-French determination to resist Hitler — did not intend to be left holding the bag in eastern Europe while the democracies made a deal at its expense with Nazi Ger-



many. All things being equal, there is no more reason to doubt the sincerity of pledges given by M. Litvinov than of those given by Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier. The real question was whether the Soviet government had the military power to implement its pledges.

This question opens up a sort of no man's land, where any answer is at best guesswork. Since the Soviet frontier is not contiguous with that of Czechoslovakia, Soviet troops would have had to go either through Poland, which would probably have refused to let them pass, or through Rumania, which could be crossed only by means of a local railway still under construction or over inadequate country roads. The Rumanian government, waiting to see which way France and Britain would jump, had not granted permission for the passage of Soviet troops before Munich. It is not unreasonable, however, to assume that if the Western democracies had taken a firm stand against Hitler, this permission would not have been withheld. The Czech military authorities, moreover, were counting not so much on Soviet troops as on Soviet airplanes, whose flight over Rumanian territory Bucharest was apparently willing to permit. What the Czechs needed most of all, so long as they retained their army and their fortifications, was Russia's moral support, which might have given pause to the Germans and, in case of war, would have prevented Czechoslovakia's complete isolation in eastern Europe.

More serious, and even less susceptible of a satisfac-

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tory answer, was the question whether Soviet defense industries and the armed forces would have stood the strain of a major conflict. Germany's expansion to the east in 1938 coincided with a period of political and economic transition in the U.S.S.R. whose ultimate results cannot yet be fully estimated. The third Five-Year Plan was launched in January 1938 without the fanfares which had greeted the first plan of the series ten years earlier, as the Soviet Union entered the third year of a far-reaching purge designed to extirpate Left and Right opposition elements charged with conspiracy against the state. The ruthless campaign against "deviations" from the "party line" begun after the murder of Kirov in Leningrad in 1934 reached its peak in 1937. By the end of 1938 it had taken a toll of over a thousand lives, among them such famous Old Bolsheviks as Zinoviev and Kamenev, prominent industrial managers like Piatakov, and army leaders like Marshal Tukhachevsky, Vice-Commissar of War. Thousands of other persons had been arrested throughout the country, including writers, dramatists, engineers, technical experts, army and navy commanders, administrative officials, educators, and diplomats. A determined effort was simultaneously made to rid the country of foreigners, even some whose loyalty to the régime had hitherto been unquestioned. The revolution, like Saturn, seemed ready to devour its children.

The charges brought against these men and women ranged from sabotage of industry, agriculture, and other branches of economic activity, to conspiracy

for the overthrow of the Soviet system with the co-operation of hostile foreign powers. At the most spectacular of the Trotskyist trials, held in Moscow in January 1937, Radek and Piatakov testified that they had been in contact with the exiled Trotsky, who had allegedly instructed his followers in the Soviet Union to form an organization for the overthrow of the Stalin government. Trotsky, they declared, had plotted with German and Japanese officials — notably Rudolf Hess, one of Hitler's closest associates — for a Fascist invasion of the Soviet Union in the hope that war, regarded as inevitable in 1937, would result in the downfall of Stalin and the establishment of a Trotsky régime. For its services to the Trotsky cause Germany, according to the testimony of the accused, was to receive the Ukraine, while Japan was to acquire the Maritime and Amur provinces — which it had occupied during the period of foreign intervention in 1918. The self-confessed plotters were to pave the way for foreign attack by acts of espionage, sabotage of industries essential for national defense, and terrorism, including assassination of Stalin and other government officials. From his asylum in Mexico Trotsky categorically denied all charges made in Moscow, and offered to produce evidence to the contrary at an impartial trial by a non-partisan international body.

That the accused, many of whom belonged to the pre-revolutionary generation and had been identified with the Trotsky opposition in 1927, were dissatisfied with Stalin's course in domestic and foreign affairs is

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entirely plausible. Such men as Radek, Piatakov, and Sokolnikov — men of intelligence, ability, and independent judgment — would be unable indefinitely to conceal their disagreement with the existing system; but neither could they, under a dictatorship, find an outlet in open criticism and legal opposition. It is not unnatural that, deprived of freedom of expression, they turned to underground activities, long a practice of the Bolshevik movement before 1917. But did their expressions of dissatisfaction and their desire for a change in régime go beyond mere talk and wishful thinking? The public confessions show that the accused — only some of whom were charged with direct participation in acts of sabotage — exchanged views and occasional letters at surprisingly long intervals of time. Such exchanges, harmless in a democracy, assume under a dictatorship the proportions of treasonable conspiracy in the minds not only of the government, but of the would-be plotters. This may explain the elaborateness of confessions which, on close examination, fail to reveal important acts of terrorism.

Again, it is entirely credible that representatives of hostile powers would utilize every opportunity to obtain the support of opposition elements in the hope of weakening the Soviet régime, and that malcontents, despairing of effecting any change by legal means, might accept foreign assistance to achieve their ends. What strained the credulity of many foreign observers was the Soviet government's attempt to establish a connection between Trotsky, fervent advocate of world

revolution, and Hitler's anti-Semitic régime, unremittingly hostile to the Third International, whose emasculation was one of Trotsky's chief grievances against Stalin. The post-war period has witnessed many strange bedfellows in European politics. But neutral observers felt that the burden of proof was on the Soviet government, and called for evidence other than the confessions of Trotsky's alleged fellow-conspirators. To the ideological confusion already prevailing in Europe was added the spectacle of the Stalin government denouncing Trotsky as a lackey of Fascism, and being in turn denounced by him for its retreat from revolutionary Communism to disguised Fascism.

Elimination of the "old guard" Bolsheviks opened the way to a period of political and economic reorganization under the unchallenged direction of Stalin and his associates, with the apparent support of the young generation, which has only academic knowledge of the men and events of 1917. Fulfillment of Stalin's program of "building Socialism in one country" has undoubtedly imposed heavy sacrifices in terms of human lives and frequent waste of machinery and raw materials. Yet the Soviet government, at the expense of consumption, has laid a basis for the simultaneous development of modern industry and large-scale agriculture financed largely out of national savings, thus liberating the country from dependence on foreign capital. An attempt has been made to solve the post-revolutionary conflict between town and country by

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collectivizing agriculture and improving the material well-being of the peasants — especially in the Ukraine, directly menaced by Nazi plans of expansion to the east. While the Soviet Union, in spite of its earlier boasts, is yet far from attaining the production levels of the United States or the average living-standards of Western countries, it is on the way to becoming a modern industrial state.

This economic development has been achieved at a heavy price in terms of individual life, liberty, and material comfort. Complete socialization of the means of production has been accompanied by wide differentiations in individual incomes, creating the possibility of new class stratifications which challenge the Soviet concept of classless society. Construction of heavy and defense industries has taken precedence of consumers' needs. Improvement in the standard of living has been hampered by disorganized industrial production, failure to develop an efficient machinery of "Socialist" distribution, and fear of a capitalist attack on "the first workers' republic in the world." Economic planning, greeted by Soviet and foreign enthusiasts as a panacea for the world's ills, has been frequently sacrificed or distorted for the sake of political expediency, thus creating crises no less acute than those experienced under capitalism. State control has not yet ensured a high degree of efficiency in utilization of labor; has not materially improved the quality of goods or reduced the cost of production according to plan; and has not raised the level of labor productivity to the extent an-

ticipated by the government. It has been accompanied by an unremitting struggle against bureaucratic tendencies in the administration of socialized economy, which the government has blamed, often unjustly, on "wrecking by enemies of the people." The worst enemies of Soviet industrial development, in the opinion of foreign observers, are not individual "wreckers" among workers and engineers, but members of the ruling Communist group who are constantly at odds with each other over fundamental questions of economic planning. What Soviet industry needs most of all is an extended period of relative political stability which would permit technical experts to fulfill their tasks without fear of reprisal.

Now that Stalin and his advisers believe they have laid the technical basis for further industrial development, they have taken the lead in urging what may be described as "the newest New Economic Policy" of "decelerating" Soviet industry. They are beginning to realize that operation of large-scale and up-to-date equipment demands a high degree of skill, which cannot be acquired overnight by untrained peasants; that methods of "shock" production frequently result in costly breakdowns, for which "wreckers" cannot always be blamed; and that economic plans must conform not to the fantasies of Communist politicians, but to the normal capacity of industry.

Many of the difficulties revealed by the Soviet economic system have been the natural result of a large-scale effort to transform a backward country, with a

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technically untrained population, into a great industrial power in the shortest possible time. In this respect the totalitarian system of the Soviet Union compares unfavorably with that of Nazi Germany, which has the advantage of operating in an efficiently organized industrial country, whose people have shown unrivaled aptitude for technical achievement. It may be doubted, however, that even with all these handicaps the Soviet Union was less prepared for a major conflict in 1938 than Russia had been in 1914. From the point of view of military training, development of defense industries, and national morale, it would probably have made at least as good a showing as Czarist Russia, which, in spite of economic disorganization and political disaffection, succeeded in enduring three years of grueling warfare with Germany. Nor does the U.S.S.R. show signs of the economic disintegration anticipated by Nazi ill-wishers.

Whatever may have been the intentions or the state of preparedness of the U.S.S.R., the record indicates that Britain made little or no effort to consult the Soviet government regarding specific Soviet aid to Czechoslovakia until after Godesberg. When negotiations were then hastily arranged with Soviet representatives in Geneva and London, the assurances they gave, whatever their intrinsic worth, were apparently of a nature to justify the announcement by the British Foreign Office on September 26 that if Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, and France went to the aid of Prague, Britain and Russia would support France. In the light



of subsequent developments, it may be doubted that this statement was more than a British maneuver to alarm Hitler, for the Chamberlain government made no further overtures to the Russians and did not trouble to include them in the Munich negotiations.

### *6. Would Hitler have Resorted to War?*

The course of events after Berchtesgaden was determined by the belief, real or feigned, of the Western democracies that Hitler was ready to risk a European war to obtain the Sudetenland. Hitherto Britain's policy had been based on the assumption that Germany was not ready for a general war and that if time could only be gained — by such devices as the Runciman mission — something would “turn up” to check the Nazi drive to the east. In his House of Commons speech on September 28, however, Mr. Chamberlain declared that during his Berchtesgaden visit Hitler had said “categorically that, rather than wait, he would be prepared to risk a world war.” This assertion apparently made a profound impression on the British Prime Minister — perhaps because it provided a moral justification for the cession of Sudetenland, which as early as May 1938 he had regarded as inevitable. It may be argued, in opposition to Mr. Chamberlain's view, that Germany's economic system, already strained by feverish rearmament, would not have withstood the shock of prolonged war; that the German General Staff was reluctant to risk war under such conditions; and that the

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German people feared war no less than the French and British.

These arguments, whatever their validity, would not necessarily have proved convincing to Hitler. The Führer had been assured by Ribbentrop — who proved to be right — that the British would not intervene in central Europe on behalf of Czechoslovakia. Under these circumstances, it is at least within the realm of probability that Hitler, like the Kaiser, may have thought that a show of force would entail no risk for Germany. The most he could have contemplated was a lightning attack on Czechoslovakia, in the course of which he would have had to do nothing more than immobilize France on the western front. Such a war he, and many of his associates, would perhaps not have rejected if it had proved necessary. For the German people, after 1919, suffered not so much because they had lost territory or been forced to pay reparations, but because they endured a military defeat which, according to the Nazis, was entirely due to a “stab in the back” by Jews, pacifists, and Socialists. Territorial acquisitions, no matter how vast and rich, would not salve this feeling of defeat, which could be wiped out only by military victory. Hitler apparently planned to confront the French and British with terms so harsh that they would be unable to force their acceptance on Prague — thus giving him an opportunity to enter Sudetenland as a conqueror. This interpretation finds support in Hitler’s statement to Mr. Chamberlain at Godesberg that “he never for one moment supposed”

France and Britain would accept the principle of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans. Hitler's Berchtesgaden terms were framed as an ultimatum intended to be rejected. In a sense, the capitulation of France and Britain at Munich robbed Nazi Germany of a military triumph.

### 7. *Would War have Stopped German Expansion to the East?*

The question must now be asked whether, if the democracies had taken the risk of war in September 1938, the ensuing conflict would have stopped German expansion to the east. In 1914 France and Britain, with the support of many smaller European countries, Japan, and, eventually, the United States, fought a world war to prevent German hegemony of the European continent. This war did not end Germany's dream of eastward expansion, vigorously revived in *Mein Kampf*; it did nothing more for Germany than establish, on the foundations of an authoritarian régime, an artificial superstructure of democracy, soon undermined by various extremist movements from the Left and from the Right; it did not bring peace and prosperity to Europe. To assert that another world war would have had more beneficial and more lasting results is to enter the realm of hypothesis. Even if it had been fought on totalitarian lines, with unlimited bombing of undefended cities by all combatants, it would not have exterminated seventy-five million Germans.

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If the democracies, by that time transformed into military dictatorships, had won — and it is at least a fair assumption that, in a prolonged conflict, the balance of forces would have been against Germany — their victory would once more have been marred by the continued existence of a resentful German people, once more longing for the hour of revenge when another Hitler would summon it to defy the world. It was natural, at the height of the crisis, to desire and demand an immediate show-down with Germany. But in the cold light of the morning after, it must be admitted that another world war would not have solved the age-long conflict between Czechs and Germans. It would not have brought democracy to Germany, even if it had abolished Nazism. It would not have ended Germany's dreams of expansion, which Hitler has inherited from the pre-war Pan-Germans. And, meanwhile, the flower of the post-war generation would once more have been slaughtered in a new attempt to make the world safe for democracy.

### *8. Was War the Only Alternative?*

No responsible person could wish that war had not been averted at Munich — even assuming that the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia merely postponed a show-down with Nazi Germany. War, however, was not the only alternative to the Munich settlement. After Godesberg, when public opinion throughout the world reacted against German intransigence,

France and Britain were in a position, not to demand maintenance of the Czechoslovak *status quo* — that had become impossible after Berchtesgaden — but to insist that the settlement should be negotiated on the basis of their proposals of September 19. Instead, the French and British statesmen gave Hitler a free hand in eastern Europe, without any tangible guarantees regarding the future of Czechoslovakia, and without making any attempt to define the limits of Germany's eastward expansion. The precedent set at Munich could not but encourage Hitler and Mussolini to believe that anyone unscrupulous enough to bring the world to the verge of war could henceforth achieve territorial aggrandizement without fighting. The post-war period had come full circle. If the Peace of Versailles was open to the charge of being an unjust treaty imposed on a prostrate people by force, the same charge could be brought against the Peace of Munich, which held out to Europe no promise except that of German hegemony.

### 9. *Will Concessions Appease Germany?*

If war would not have stopped German expansion, will the Munich concessions appease Germany and restore a measure of peace in Europe? It would be comforting to answer this question in the affirmative. It must be recognized, however, that the German desire for expansion is not merely the result of the "shame" of Versailles. In 1914, when Germany was a strong military power and had achieved economic expansion in

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the Balkans, it was already protesting against "encirclement." Can it be that the German people are by nature incapable of living at peace with the European community? Or is Nazism, like Kaiserism, merely a childhood disease attributable to Germany's retarded national development, which will be cured as Germany becomes a "satisfied" power and reaches the stage of national maturity? Is the German spirit fundamentally incompatible with the civilization of western Europe, a compound of the Roman Empire, the Renaissance, and the French Revolution, none of which had been fully assimilated by German consciousness — or can a basis be found for coexistence with Germany?

In all fairness, it must be admitted that other nations before Germany had disturbed the peace of Europe. Napoleon, the Corsican Corporal, was viewed with at least as much fear and resentment when he overran Europe and pushed on eastward to Moscow as Hitler, the Austrian Corporal, is regarded today. Yet in 1938 France showed little interest in militarism and wanted, above all, peace and the preservation of its possessions. Perhaps Germany, too, having gone through a period of nationalist expansion, will settle down to peaceful development of its newly won resources — even though its people seem to have a stronger predilection for military drill and subordination to authority than others. Should such a transformation occur in the long run, it might justify Mr. Chamberlain's policy of "appeasement," which in the foreshortened perspective of 1938 seemed to doom Europe to Nazi oppression.

## VII. FLASHBACK TO 1914



STRIKING ANALOGIES between 1914 and 1938 indicate the extent to which, in spite of the new ideologies of Fascism and Communism, immutable factors like geography, national characteristics, and natural resources tended to repeat — although not to duplicate — the pattern of pre-war history.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It would be impossible to list all the books which have been found useful in comparing 1914 with 1938. Among recent works may be mentioned the following: G. P. Gooch: *Before the War: Studies in Diplomacy*, two volumes (New York: Longmans, Green, & Company; 1936, 1938); G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, editors: *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*,

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In 1914, as in 1938, Europe had been left uneasy by "local" wars — not in Ethiopia and Spain, but in Tripoli and the Balkans. Germany, consolidated by Bismarck, was challenging Britain on the high seas (instead of in the air), and extending its economic influence in the Balkans and the Near East. German soldiers and technicians were entrenched in Turkey, which, like Spain in 1938, served as an arena for the rivalries of the great powers. The German Empire, which had acquired poor but strategically important colonies along the coast of Africa, hoped to obtain a share in the development of the Belgian Congo and the adjoining Portuguese colonies.

Great as had been its economic achievements since 1870, Germany in 1914, as in 1938, was haunted by fear of encirclement. France's desire to regain Alsace-Lorraine aroused the apprehension of the German Empire, which had tried to divert French attention from Europe to North Africa — as Nazi Germany was to divert Fascist Italy from Austria to the Mediterranean. But it was Russia, acknowledged leader of the Slav peoples in eastern Europe, whom Germany regarded as the real menace to its *Drang nach Osten*. In 1914, as in 1938, German politicians deprecated the efficiency of the Russian army, but feared that Russia's economic development would eventually endanger German hegemony in central Europe. Pan-Slavism, instead of

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ten volumes (London: H.M. Stationery Office; 1927-38); Pierre Renouvin: "Britain and the Continent: The Lessons of History," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1938, p. 110; and Theodor Wolff: *The Eve of 1914* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1936).



Pan-Communism, was then the bogey of the German General Staff, which in 1918, by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk — described by Hitler as “humane” when compared with Versailles — wrested from the Soviet government Russian Poland, Lithuania, Kurland, Livonia, and Estonia. At Brest-Litovsk Russia was also forced to recognize the independence of Finland, the Ukraine, and Georgia and to pay Germany six billion marks in reparations.

Germany's ally, Austria-Hungary, with its large Slav population of Czechs, Croats, and Slovenes, was even more directly affected by the growth of Pan-Slavism. The rise of Serbia, which with Russia's support sought to establish a kingdom of the South Slavs dominating the Adriatic, challenged Vienna's rule over the Croats; and Croat aspirations, in turn, threatened to disrupt the Dual Monarchy. Italy, since 1882 a link in the Berlin-Vienna-Rome axis, was not regarded by the German General Staff as a trustworthy ally. Italian colonial aspirations had met with disaster at Adowa in 1896 — a disaster avenged forty years later by Mussolini; but following a war with Turkey in 1911-12, Italy had obtained Libya and Tripoli. While expanding on the African continent, Italy also wanted to recover Italian-speaking provinces ruled by Austria, and had warned its allies that it would not fight against Britain. In 1914, as in 1938, Italy was divided between its desire to create a sphere of influence in the Balkans, which conflicted with German and Slav ambitions, and its colonial aspirations in Africa.

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Confronted by Germany's naval expansion and economic drive to the east, France, Britain, and Russia accelerated their war preparations and cemented their Triple Entente by naval and military consultations. The British government, in its negotiations with France, acted as it was subsequently to do in the case of Czechoslovakia. Reluctant to undertake "a deliberate engagement" pledging it "in advance before the actual cause of the war is known or apparent," it declined to form an alliance with France, contending that if the French were certain of British support, they would be less inclined to make concessions to Germany. In 1914, as in 1938, British statesmen declared that England would go to war only "in defense of British interests," and only if public opinion could be convinced that Germany was responsible for the conflict. They agreed, however, that "the continued existence of a strong and independent France was of vital interest" to Britain; that in case of a Franco-German war Britain could not remain neutral; that it had a "moral obligation" to aid France; and that if it failed to carry out this obligation Britain, in the words of Sir Edward Grey, would "be left without a friend and without the power of making a friend and Germany would take some pleasure, after what has passed, in exploiting the whole situation to our disadvantage." On the other hand, said the British Foreign Secretary, "the prospect of a European war and of our being involved in it is horrible."

While Britain thus had at least a "moral obligation"

to aid France and a treaty obligation to aid Belgium, it was not clear what the British would do if Germany and Austria-Hungary clashed with Russia over some issue of Balkan politics. To risk a European war in that region, said Sir Edward Grey in 1908, when Russia demanded compensation for Serbia after Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, would be "out of all proportion to the interests involved." Yet in 1912 Sir Edward wrote George V that, while Britain "is not committed in the event of war," and public opinion "is . . . very averse to a war arising out of a quarrel about Serbia," yet if Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia "aggressively" and Russia or France were drawn into the ensuing conflict, "it might become necessary for England to fight . . . for the defence of her position in Europe and for the protection of her own future and security" — a statement not unlike Mr. Chamberlain's speech of March 24, 1938 regarding Czechoslovakia.

Britain's policy toward a possible conflict in southeastern Europe was complicated by the unsatisfactory character of its relations with Czarist Russia. In 1914 British liberals regarded Russia's undemocratic political system with undisguised repugnance, while British imperialists suspected the Czarist government of sinister designs on Persia and India. Sir George Buchanan, British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, feared that unless Britain gave Russia assurances of diplomatic and military support, it might "one day strike a bargain with Germany. . . . Our position then would be a

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very parlous one." In spite of this danger, of Sir Edward Grey's personal interest in an alliance with Russia, and of France's pleas for closer collaboration between its two potential allies, Anglo-Russian relations by August 1914 had not progressed beyond tentative naval-staff conversations.

Reluctant to divide Europe into two camps, thus hastening a crisis which might involve Britain in a general war, Sir Edward Grey, like Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax, tried to "appease" Germany by concessions. These concessions were to be made not at the expense of Britain and its colonies, but of other countries — notably Portugal, then as now Britain's ally. In 1912 the German government refused to consider naval limitation unless Britain gave a promise of "benevolent neutrality should war be forced on Germany" — thus hoping to deprive France of British aid. When London, in return, offered only a pledge of "non-aggression" similar to the Anglo-German declaration signed at Munich, Germany proceeded to increase its navy. Fearing German competition on the high seas, the British government tried to placate the Reich by offering it a share in the control of the Portuguese colonies, which, at an opportune moment, were to be divided between Britain and Germany, and financial assistance in the construction of the Bagdad railway.

The pre-war world breathlessly watched every move of the Kaiser, no more predictable than Hitler, wondering whether he would choose peace or war. In this

tense atmosphere, punctuated since the turn of the century by recurring crises in Europe and Africa, peace, according to the Belgian Minister in Berlin, "remained at the mercy of an accident."

When that accident occurred at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, the Vienna government, having first obtained a pledge of assistance from the Kaiser, sent an ultimatum to Belgrade which neutral observers described at that time as a deliberate provocation. Its unconditional acceptance would have left Serbia at the mercy of Austria-Hungary. Serbia's reply, accepting Austria's principal terms, was unsatisfactory to the Vienna militarists, who welcomed this opportunity to crush Serb nationalism once and for all. Belgrade's unparalleled submission did not prevent Austria-Hungary from embarking on a military expedition which was to develop into a general war.

The German government, grasping at the eleventh hour the implications of the Balkan crisis, tried to "localize" the conflict and, at worst, secure a pledge of British neutrality. This pledge Britain once more declined to give. Russia, determined to resist German penetration in the Balkans, supported Serbia, but Berlin hoped against hope that the Russians, as in 1908, would not go beyond diplomatic protests. France had no desire for war. But since 1870 it had awaited the hour of *revanche*, celebrated by its nationalist poets, and saw in the war an opportunity to recover Alsace-Lorraine. Sir Edward Grey feverishly worked to effect a compromise, underestimating the almost hysteri-

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cal fear which Slav nationalism had inspired in Vienna — just as Mr. Chamberlain failed to understand, until Berchtesgaden, the profound skepticism with which Hitler viewed all promises made by Czechoslovakia.

In spite of repeated warnings by Lichnowsky, German Ambassador in London, the German government persisted in believing that Britain would not intervene in eastern Europe. In July 1914, as in September 1938, the French contended that nothing but an irrefutable declaration of British policy could avert catastrophe. This declaration Britain was finally compelled to make on August 3, 1914, too late to stop the wheels of war set turning by general mobilizations on the continent. The German Reichstag, listening to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg's announcement of war, sincerely believed that Germany had been attacked. But if Germany bore a large share of responsibility for the outbreak of war, every European country, by action or inaction, had contributed in some measure to a conflict which had taken no one unawares.

After 1933 Hitler's astute diplomacy, profiting by the blunders of his opponents, reconstructed the German-Austro-Italian bloc of pre-war days — with the important exception of Hungary, Memel, the German sections of Poland, and the colonies — and resumed economic penetration of the Balkans. This penetration was dictated both by the economic necessities of the Nazi totalitarian system and by its anti-Russian policy, disguised as anti-Communism. More successful, or perhaps less scrupulous, than the Kaiser,

Hitler neutralized any action France or Britain might have wanted to take east of the Rhine, and distracted their attention from central Europe by encouraging the creation of alternative centers of conflict in Spain and the Far East. Italo-German aid to General Franco not only threatened French and British interests in the Mediterranean, but prevented Italy from resisting German penetration into its Balkan sphere of influence; while Germany's anti-Communist pact with Japan served the double purpose of driving other Western powers from the Orient, and forcing Russia to prepare for war on two fronts.

Confronted by the rise of a new German empire, whose impact was accelerated by the dynamic drive of Nazi radicalism, the Western powers adopted policies not unlike those they had followed in pre-war years. France, discovering that its alliances with the countries of eastern Europe had been weakened by the resurgence of Germany, concentrated once more on collaboration with Britain and Russia. As in 1914, it failed to effect a rapprochement between Britain — whose ruling class felt at least as much repugnance for Communism as pre-war liberals had felt for Czarism — and Russia, which under Stalin, as under the czars, distrusted “perfidious Albion.”

With the development of air warfare, which made it imperative for Britain to protect its first line of defense in France and the Low Countries, British governments, going beyond their 1914 commitments, indicated they would defend French territory against

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German attack. The doubts regarding British policy which had overshadowed France in 1914 had now shifted eastward to Czechoslovakia, for which France had been unable to obtain a pledge of British assistance. The British again sought to appease the Germans, for whom they again felt more sympathy than for the French, regarded with vague uneasiness as overshrewd and immoral. Mr. Chamberlain, like Sir Edward Grey in the case of France, believed that a pledge of assistance to Czechoslovakia would merely encourage Prague to refuse concessions to Germany. While perfecting its French alliance, Britain carried on negotiations with Germany regarding air (as well as naval) limitation and possible territorial concessions — this time consisting of Austria, Sudetenland, and a colonial pool composed of the Belgian Congo and a part of the Portuguese colonies.

In the Sudeten dispute, as in the crisis precipitated by Austria-Hungary's ultimatum to Serbia, Britain tried to play the role of mediator between Germany and a Slav state which, like Serbia, barred German expansion to the east. Recalling Italy's decision to remain neutral in 1914, Britain first sought to detach Mussolini from the Rome-Berlin axis by concessions in Spain and the Red Sea; then to counteract German economic influence in the Balkans by loans and the purchase of surplus agricultural produce. These activities on the periphery of the European crisis could not long conceal from Britain the fact that Nazi Germany, like the Germany of the Hohenzollerns, must, in its struggle



to achieve world power, clash sooner or later with the British Empire, whose control of strategic raw materials it had already challenged in Spain and Sweden, in Mexico and Iran, and whose rule over the Arabs it had undermined by its policy of anti-Semitism, which added fuel to the Palestine conflict. It became increasingly obvious that if Britain entered a general war against Germany, it would not be over the fate of Czechoslovakia or Rumania, any more than it had been over that of Belgium in 1914, but over the issue of German hegemony in Europe — and the world. Under new slogans reappeared in all its nakedness the old struggle between two imperialisms, one of which was in the ascendant, while the other was entering a period of at least temporary eclipse.

Pre-war history seemed to repeat itself in 1938. But new threads varied the pattern. France, still fearful of German hegemony, no longer sought territorial aggrandizement and had nothing to gain by war. Britain, less certain of Dominion support than in pre-war days, was more anxious to reach a compromise with the Reich. Greater Germany was more efficiently coordinated under a totalitarian régime, and better equipped for air warfare than in 1914, but less prepared to withstand the economic and moral strain of prolonged conflict. Russia no longer assumed the leadership of Slav peoples in the name of Pan-Slavism; but for millions of people throughout the world it had become the symbol of resistance to Fascism. Italy, which in 1914 regarded Britain as its friend, had since

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defied it in Africa and the Mediterranean; yet it was not clear how long Italy would support Germany, which had excluded it from central Europe, if it obtained British support in wresting territorial concessions from France in Africa. The new states created in eastern Europe after the World War were no less jealous of their national independence than Rumania and Serbia had been in 1914, but were vulnerable to German economic influence and the Nazi technique of boring from within. Japan, Britain's pre-war ally, had joined forces with Germany and Italy against Communism, and seemed determined to drive Western powers from Asia, which it regarded as its exclusive sphere of influence. The United States, having gone through the ordeal of the World War, was far more aware of the implications of the European crisis than in 1914. Nazi Germany inspired Americans with a feeling of fear and revulsion which had not existed before the war. In spite of manifold efforts to find a workable formula of neutrality, this country's sympathies, even after Munich, were on the side of Britain and France. Yet the United States was more determined than in 1914 to stay out of a European conflict.

What saved Europe in September 1938 from the fate it suffered in August 1914 were not Mr. Chamberlain's personal conversations with Hitler, nor the appeals of President Roosevelt, nor the mediation of Mussolini. The choice between war and peace was determined by three paramount considerations which had not existed in 1914: the fear of air warfare; the

desire of all peoples, including Germans and Italians — irrespective of economic status and political convictions — to avoid war; and the determination of the ruling class in France and Britain to avert social revolution, which, they believed, would have been the aftermath of a general conflict. These diverse but complementary emotions made it possible for Hitler, a shrewd student of mass psychology, to obtain without war the objectives the Kaiser had failed to achieve by force.

Technical improvement of air warfare, which menaces not merely professional soldiers but civilian populations, had in a sense reduced war to an intolerable absurdity — not because it had proved decisive, as shown by the experience of China and Loyalist Spain, but because in modern urban communities it robbed war of all but its grisly aspects and threatened to sever the principal arteries of economic life. In 1914 Europe had had only limited experience of modern warfare. Recollections of the Franco-Prussian conflict of 1870 still clothed war with some shreds of glamour. The attitude of European statesmen after Sarajevo seems criminally frivolous when compared with the profound anguish which gripped all peoples twenty years after the World War. By 1938 the masses — outspokenly in the democracies, silently in the dictatorships — had come to the conclusion that peace was more important than any gains which might be achieved by force, regarding war as the ultimate horror. During the Czechoslovak crisis it was not a ques-

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tion of peace through pacifist conviction, but of peace through lack of desire to fight. This lack of bellicose sentiment, with what must seem to pacifists like unpoetic justice, redounded solely to the benefit of those who believed in the superiority of force over reason. It so redounded because Hitler succeeded in persuading Germany's potential opponents that Communism, which they all feared, would alone reap such fruits as might be garnered from war. This fear, too, had not existed in 1914, when capitalism appeared to have reached a stage of relative stability, little suspecting the revolt which threatened it from within.

## VIII. THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME



THE MUNICH accord opened the dikes against territorial change erected at Versailles, releasing the full flood of national resentments, ambitions, and animosities hitherto held in check by the *status quo* states. It simultaneously reversed the post-war balance of power, based on the continental hegemony of France and its eastern-European allies, which, with varying degrees of support from Britain and other League states, had struggled to prevent the resurgence of Prussian militarism.

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With the destruction of Czechoslovakia's military power Germany, having won the cheapest victory in modern history, became the dominant state on the European continent and obtained access to eastern Europe and the Balkans. Hitler's racial theories preclude the incorporation in the Third Reich of the eighty-five million non-Germans inhabiting rump Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Greece. These countries, rich in foodstuffs and raw materials needed by a highly industrialized Reich, are to serve not as political provinces, but as colonies where Slavs and other peoples regarded as inferior are to labor for the benefit of the German master race. Their assistance is to be commandeered and retained by two techniques which have already proved useful in this region: political penetration, which, without outright intervention, utilizes the presence of German minorities, no matter how small, to place pro-Nazi elements in control of native dictatorships; and the so-called barter method, first evolved by Dr. Schacht but perfected by the Nazis. Through this method Germany obtains — at prices fixed in advance well above world levels — a large share of these countries' products such as wheat, oil, and tobacco, either using them for its own needs or "dumping" them abroad in exchange for the foreign currency it must have to purchase essential war materials. For these products Germany's creditors are paid not in currency they can spend in other markets, but in the form of German manufactured goods, consisting for the most

part of obsolete war material, technical equipment for the construction of military or industrial plants in the creditor countries, or specialized products like opera glasses, mouth-organs and cameras, which can hardly be of immediate use to the peasants of Hungary and Yugoslavia. These two techniques, operated by a country whose military power cannot be matched by any one of its neighbors to the east or south, are calculated to bring the entire Danubian region into subjection to the Third Reich.

From such subjection the countries of eastern Europe can hope to escape only in one of two ways. Either they might find outlets for their goods in markets other than Germany, thus breaking the Nazi economic stranglehold which threatens their political independence; or they might rise in open revolt against Teuton domination, which in the past has never failed to arouse the resentment of Slavs and Magyars. Both of these courses, however, presuppose the willingness of the Western powers to furnish the Danubian states with financial or military assistance — preferably both.

Pleas for such assistance, addressed after Munich to France and Britain by the rulers of Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Greece, met with little encouragement from the Western powers, which seemed resigned to German hegemony east of the Rhine and had concentrated their attention on consolidation of their own defenses and development of their overseas empires. Britain, whose trade with southeastern Europe before Munich constituted only two per cent of its total for-

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eign trade, resumed its traditional policy of defending the British Isles — and with them France and the Low Countries — against aggression from the continent, rejecting the universal obligations prescribed by the League Covenant. France, confined to the Atlantic seaboard, was, for the time being, isolated from eastern Europe and reduced to dependence on Britain. Hitler, in spite of his wistful reference to the architectural beauties of Strasbourg Cathedral, may have been sincere in asserting that Germany had abandoned all desire to recover Alsace-Lorraine; but France was menaced by the colonial ambitions of Mussolini, who lost no time in presenting his bill for services rendered at Munich, and alarmed by Italo-German domination of Rebel Spain.

France, as it had done after its defeat at Sedan, planned to compensate for losses in Europe by development of its colonies. But neither France nor Britain could look at their overseas empires with any degree of complacency. These empires were menaced by Italo-German agitation among Moslem nationalists, and peculiarly vulnerable to that doctrine of self-determination which Chamberlain and Daladier recognized at Munich on behalf of Sudeten Germans, but which may yet be invoked by Arabs in Palestine or Italians in Tunis.

Yet it would be easy to exaggerate the strength of Greater Germany. Even with the acquisition of Austria and Sudetenland — which increased its need for food imports — the Third Reich has not reached the



confines of the pre-war German-Austrian bloc that commanded Hungary's foodstuffs and the resources of Upper Silesia. Germany's strength since 1933 has sprung from the grim determination of a defeated people, encouraged by the Nazis to believe they had genuine grievances against a world which threatened them with encirclement and economic strangulation. The German people were either coerced or persuaded by the most far-reaching propaganda in history to make enormous sacrifices in terms of liberty and material comfort for the purpose of achieving an impregnable military and economic position from which they, in turn, might browbeat other powers into concessions or outright submission. The Munich settlement, which marked the apogee of Nazi diplomacy — and demonstrated that a victorious Germany could impose a peace no less ruthless than that of Versailles — had the effect of removing one of Hitler's principal arguments for the creation of a monolithic nation. The fact that Nazi propaganda, immediately after Munich, summoned forth bogies in the form of "British warmongers," "Yankee imperialists," and "international Jewish criminals" indicated the extent to which Hitler felt he had to keep the Germans in a state of permanent material and spiritual mobilization. Such a mobilization, as demonstrated by the experience of the U.S.S.R., tends to produce diminishing returns — unless the dictatorship is ready to embark on further and still further adventures. The apathy of the German people during the Czechoslovak crisis indicated that

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popular appetite for such adventures might be approaching the point of satiation.

Meanwhile, however, the hope of Mr. Chamberlain and his supporters in other countries that territorial concessions might cause the Nazis to relax their persecution of religious and racial minorities was rudely shattered by the anti-Semitic outbreaks of November 1938, which revealed that concessions had merely removed the restraints that international setbacks might have imposed on Nazi extremists. These extremists, some of whom occupy key positions on Field Marshal Göring's Four-Year Plan staff, are determined to achieve economic totalitarianism as rapidly as possible by expropriating private property on racial or religious grounds, and rigidly subordinating private initiative to the needs of the state. German domination of eastern Europe and the Balkans formed part of their ambitious program; and many of them looked longingly toward the Soviet Union, where they saw a natural market for German-manufactured goods, challenged in Latin America by British and American competition, and in Asia by Japan's determination to close the open door to Western commerce.

The extent to which the Soviet Union would be prepared to meet such plans half-way — assuming, of course, that Hitler was prepared to moderate his anti-Communist crusade as Stalin had moderated the anti-capitalist crusade of the Third International — remained obscure after Munich. Isolated from the Western democracies, about which the Soviet government

never cherished any illusions, the U.S.S.R. might, as in the early post-war years, concentrate its attention on the Far East and conclude another Rapallo Treaty with Germany in an attempt to divert the Nazi drive from the Ukraine to the Persian Gulf. Alternatively, the U.S.S.R. might join Poland and other countries fearful of German expansion in their efforts to erect a new dike against the Nazi flood.

Poland, which hitherto had tried to preserve a precarious balance between its two formidable neighbors — Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia — discovered after Munich that its ten-year non-aggression pact with the Reich did not prevent the Nazis from agitating for the return of Danzig, expelling Polish Jews from Germany, and blocking the creation of a common Polish-Hungarian frontier. Fearing that Hitler might use Poland's five million Ukrainians as an entering wedge for the establishment of an "independent" Ukraine, the Poles made advances to Moscow for economic collaboration, and in November 1938 the two countries reaffirmed their non-aggression pact of 1934. Poland wanted to form a coalition of states menaced by Germany's eastward drive — the Baltic states, Hungary, Rumania, and possibly Yugoslavia, where the general elections of December 1938 revealed popular dissatisfaction with the pro-German orientation of Premier Stoyadinovitch. This coalition might eventually draw into its orbit both the Soviet Union and dismembered Czechoslovakia. In the past, anti-Communism, which dominated the internal politics of Poland, Rumania,

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Hungary, and Yugoslavia, had prevented their collaboration with the U.S.S.R. This trend might be reversed if Germany, in pressing its post-Munich advantages, displays traditional German tactlessness in dealing with non-German peoples. Should the countries of eastern Europe set their mutual grievances aside long enough to form such a coalition, it might yet develop that Hitler's problems had only begun at Munich, when he first came face to face with non-German peoples opposed to Teuton domination.

It is not impossible, however, that in such an eventuality the Nazis, recalling Napoleon's ill-fated Russian campaign, might be willing to come to terms with the Soviet Union. Should this occur, Germany would be in a position to turn against the West free of its pre-war fear of having to fight on two fronts; and Mr. Chamberlain's hope of diverting Germany from west to east would be doomed to disappointment. For the most striking aspect of the Munich aftermath was that the Nazi attack, previously directed against France, Russia, and Czechoslovakia, once regarded as obstacles to Germany's eastward drive, had shifted to Britain and the United States, which blocked German expansion outside of Europe. In its bid for world power, Nazi Germany threatened to clash with the British Empire and the United States in Africa and Latin America — not by military force, but by that combination of propaganda and economic penetration which enabled the Reich to obtain Austria and Sudetenland without firing a shot. Should that happen, the Munich accord,

far from having inaugurated an era of appeasement, would merely have set the stage for a major conflict between imperialist systems which, under the slogan of democracy versus Fascism (replacing the 1914 slogan of democracy versus autocracy), would repeat the pattern of the World War. In such a struggle the United States, despite its desire for isolation, apparently intends to play a decisive part by consolidating the countries of the Western hemisphere against hostile penetration from Europe. Yet continued large-scale armament, designed to save the democracies from both war and totalitarianism, merely accelerates the world's trend toward state-controlled economy which, no less than a general war, spells the doom of private enterprise.

The twentieth century is, to some extent, reliving the history of the nineteenth. The grandiose plans for permanent peace formulated after the Napoleonic wars by the Holy Alliance failed both to preserve the *status quo* against the resurgence of France, and to suppress the revolt of the "lower orders" and subject nationalities against authoritarian rule. The tide of revolution, starting from Spain in 1820, rapidly spread over the continent, creating the same alarm in governing circles as that aroused by Communism and Fascism a hundred years later. The forces of nationalism and revolution, benefiting by Britain's policy of non-intervention on the continent — proclaimed by Castlereagh in terms strikingly similar to those used by the British government in the Spanish conflict of 1936 — chal-

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lenged both the peace settlement of 1815 and the anti-revolutionary front of the *status quo* states. Some of the problems regarded in 1938 as extraordinary and catastrophic had already confronted the nineteenth century, now viewed in retrospect as a golden age of progress, stability, and prosperity.

Today, when another political and economic *status quo* is threatened or already undermined by new revolutions, it becomes increasingly clear that international life, like the life of the individual, has no final point at which equilibrium may be said to have been permanently reached. The only finality known to man is death. As long as there is life there must be change or a desire for change. Nor can those who either attack or defend the existing order be regarded as unmitigated villains. The mass production of political labels indiscriminately applied is one of the worst evils of our age. No class or race or creed has a monopoly of virtue. Not all capitalists are blood-sucking leeches, not all workers are generous or intelligent. The English are not all hypocritical; the Germans are not all brutal; the Americans are not all moral and efficient. Capitalism may not be the best, but in perspective it may not seem the worst economic system in history. Class hatreds can be as destructive as international hatreds. War did not originate with capitalism; it may not come to an end with collectivism. The worst possible illusion is to expect more from the politicians of Downing Street, the Wilhelmstrasse, or the Kremlin than is expected from the politicians of Capitol Hill. They may be

playing for higher stakes, but their moral level is usually no better — although probably no worse — than the general level of their time.

Lack of illusion about the international situation is by no means synonymous with despair. The often revolting, but unfailingly absorbing details of day-to-day international politics cannot muffle the overtones of universal ideas concerning collaboration between men and nations which make themselves heard again and again throughout history. Dictatorships may stultify minds. They cannot destroy ideas. But if the ideas of democracy and international co-operation are to prevail, they must not be allowed to remain in blueprint. They must be woven, every day and every hour, no matter how small or vast the sphere of one's activities, into the web and woof of national existence. Not protestations of faith, but only constant practice, can preserve Western democracy against the inroads of Fascism. To fight fire with fire, to use the methods of dictatorships in an effort to destroy them, would merely transform the democracies into totalitarian states. If the Western world is to prevail over Fascism it must redefine, in equally dynamic terms, the ideas it offers as an alternative, and correct those grievances against democracy which in the past have proved Hitler's most effective allies.

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